THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

EDITED BY

JAMES HASTINGS, D.D.

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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

JAMES HASTINGS, D.D.

EDITOR OF
'THE EXPOSITORY TIMES' 'THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE'
'THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS'
AND OTHER WORKS

ASSISTED BY B. A. CLARK.

THE BOOK OF JOB.

PSALMS I.

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The aim of THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE is to preserve all that is worth preserving of the modern interpretation of the Bible. It is the thought rather than the expression that is retained, though the expression has not been rejected when it seemed worthy. So much, however, has been done in the way of condensing, rearranging, rewriting, adding to, and illustrating, that the sources have not as a rule been given. But so far as these are published sermons, they will be found in the Index to Modern Sermons which accompanies each volume. THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE contains also much that is new, written by the Editor and others.

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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

THE BOOK OF JOB

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Job deals with a problem of human life. The problem is this: Why do the righteous suffer? And the principal aim of the book is to controvert the theory, dominant at the time when it was written, that suffering or misfortune is a sign of the Divine displeasure, and presupposes sin on the part of the sufferer.

1. The doctrine that righteousness brings prosperity, while wickedness results in misfortune, is often taught in the Old Testament. The verse (Ps. xxxvii. 9), 'Wicked doers shall be rooted out; and they that patiently abide the Lord, those shall inherit the land,' is but one of the many aphorisms in which it is inculcated. Such aphorisms are particularly frequent in the Book of Proverbs (especially ch. x.ff.). Of course, in a large measure the doctrine is true. Society being constituted as it is, the habits characteristic of righteousness are such as win a man respect from his fellow-men and command success. On the other hand, wickedness paralyses the moral energies, blinds an individual and a nation alike to the real conditions upon which prosperity depends, and often overreaches itself. The doctrine was deeply impressed on the ancient Hebrew mind; and all exceptions were a source of great perplexity to it. The perplexity was the greater because the Hebrews had an imperfect conception of *general laws*, whether in Nature or in society. They were keenly sensible of God's omnipresence, and pictured Him as interposing actively in the course of the world: hence virtue overtaken by calamity, or vice flourishing unrebuked, seemed to them to cast a direct slur upon the justice of God's government of the world. But, the laws governing Nature and the constitution of society being general ones, it may happen that in individual cases their operation does not result in the reward of virtue or the punishment of sin. The forces of Nature may combine to overwhelm the innocent; the innocent, in virtue of the society in which they live, may suffer through the ill-deeds of the guilty, or wickedness may elude detection, and triumph unchecked.

(1) One solution which the Hebrew thinker found was that the prosperity of the wicked was short-lived, that it met with a sudden and ignominious fall (Ps. xxxvii. 9f., 20, 36, lxxiii. 18-20); while the righteous in the end inherited the land (Ps. xxxvii.), or was conscious that he owned a higher and inalienable spiritual possession (Ps. xlix. 15, lxxiii. 23-26).

(2) In the case of the sufferings of the righteous there was a tendency to invert the argument, and to conclude that *because* sin was followed by suffering, *therefore* suffering, and especially aggravated suffering, was necessarily a consequence of some antecedent sin. That this conclusion is illogical is, of course,

obvious. Nevertheless, it was a conclusion that was widely drawn; it prevailed even to the days of Christ (Luke xiii. 1-4; John ix. 2). And it was the conclusion which Job's friends drew. Job's sufferings, they argue, convict him implicitly of some grave antecedent sin, which they urge him to acknowledge and repent of. This conclusion Job controverts. He steadily refuses to admit that he is guilty of any sin adequate to account for his extraordinary sufferings. And when his friends appeal to the evidences of God's retributive justice visible in the world, he retorts by pointing to the numerous instances which experience affords of the wicked prospering even to the day of their death.

The mystery presses on him the more intensely because he has no clear view of any life beyond the grave. Nor has he any conception of what we regard as 'secondary causes.' In every event he sees only the direct action of God. Thus Browning makes Luria say:

> My own East!
> How nearer God we were! He glows above
> With scarce an intervention, presses close
> And palpitatingly, his soul o'er ours:
> We feel him, nor by painful reason know!
> The everlasting minute of creation
> Is felt there; now it is, as it was then;
> All changes at his instantaneous will,
> Not by the operation of a law
> Whose maker is elsewhere at other work.

This tells both ways. In prosperity it is sweet to feel God's hand (Job xxix. 2ff.), but what if the despairing dreams of sickness be of His sending? (Job vii. 14: and compare Ps. viii. with Job vii. 17ff.). How shall man know which of the 'two voices' is truly the voice of God?

This problem still presses on the minds of men, as in Tennyson's poem of 'The two Voices,' but in Old Testament times it was a far harder problem to solve; and for Job, as for Tennyson, the solution came, not to the intellect but to the eye of faith. This, too, was through that wider view of Nature's plan which came home to Job in chaps. xxxiii.-xlii.

> And all so variously wrought,
> I marvell'd how the mind was brought
> To anchor by one gloomy thought;
>
> And wherefore rather I made choice
> To commune with that barren voice,
> Than him that said, 'Rejoice! rejoice!'

2. The main aim of the book is thus a negative one—to controvert the dominant theory that all suffering proceeds from sin: God's retributive justice is not the only principle by which men are governed.

(1) Positively the book teaches that sufferings may befall the righteous, not as a chastisement for their sins, but as a trial of their righteousness, and a test of its sincerity, and that as such they have a tendency to confirm and establish character. Eliphaz (v. 17ff.) and, particularly, Elihu (xxxiii. 15-30, xxxvi. 8-21) insist in addition—though their teaching on the subject is not, it is true, applicable to Job's case—upon the disciplinary value of suffering.

(2) The book teaches the danger of conceiving too narrowly of God and His providence: by conceiving of Him solely as a dispenser of rewards and punishments, the friends charge Job unjustly with grave sin; and Job, conscious of his innocence, imputes injustice to God, and is tempted to cast off his fear of Him altogether.

(3) Inasmuch as Job, in spite of his combined physical and mental suffering, does not succumb to this temptation, it teaches, in opposition to the insinuation of the Satan (i. 9), that man is capable of real and disinterested goodness, and can love God for His own sake.

(4) It teaches (chs. xxxviii.-xlii.) that the true solution of moral perplexities is to be found in a fuller and larger sense of God, in a conception of Him as the Author of a vast and infinitely complex system of Nature, in which it is unreasonable for the individual to conceive of himself as isolated from the care of Providence, or to infer that his sufferings have no place in God's purpose. 'He alone, who has comprehended the vast universe that God must govern, has the full right to say whether He governs it well or ill.'

(5) It has also, probably, a practical aim—

that of helping the author's contemporaries, who appear to have been in circumstances of national depression, to understand the situation in which they were placed, and of encouraging them to hope for a favourable issue. In other words, Job is a type of the suffering godly Israelite.

3. The book is in its main portion a poem, not a narrative or history. For this latter purpose the sacred writers invariably employed prose. It opens, indeed, and it closes with a short portion of narrative and therefore of prose, but the bulk of the book, nearly forty chapters out of forty-two, forms in the truest and highest yet simplest sense of the word a poem, a sacred poem. Moreover, it is the longest that has come down to us in all that varied collection of inspired literature to which we give the common name of the Bible. But it is as truly and as certainly a poem as *Paradise Lost* and the *Iliad* are poems of England and of Greece.

To what class of poetry does this poem belong? The question has often been asked, and very variously answered. We see at once that, though we may find imbedded in it passages that might well find a home in the Book of Psalms or of Proverbs, yet it differs from either. It is not, like the former, a series of detached hymns, embodying the very highest meditative outpourings of the human heart, glad or sorrowful, national or individual, to its God. Nor do we find in its pages, as in so large a portion of the latter, the common-sense of the many framed in verse by the wisdom of one or more. It is as different as possible from the poetry, idyllic or mystic, of the Song of Solomon; or from the meditations on life, placed on the borderland of prose and poetry, of the Book of Ecclesiastes. It resembles indeed the Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, as dealing with the practical and the speculative interests of human life. But in other respects it differs fundamentally from both. First, it gathers all its teaching round a single personage, the hero of the poem, who from the beginning to the end forms the one centre of interest. And secondly, whatever problems it raises, or whatever lessons it teaches, they come to us, when once we have read the first line of the actual poem, through the lips, never of the author himself, but of the speakers, human or Divine or other, whom he places on the stage. Whoever was the author of the book, he confines himself to placing before us the persons who are to speak to us, and to indicating something, where necessary, of their circumstances and characters.

Theodore of Mopsuestia was censured by the Council of Constantinople for calling the book a drama; but he was doubtless essentially right. The plot is as thrilling as it is simple, and all the sons of God seem to wait in breathless suspense for the issue of a trial which involves the eternal honour of the human race. The *dramatis personæ* are clearly conceived and their characters duly sustained, and in the course of the dialogues the relation of the three friends to the central figure undergoes a perceptible change. The chief advantage of the dramatic form is that it lets the subject-matter be viewed in a variety of aspects, and, in particular, that it enables 'a suffering saint to say the worst things about God which can enter into the minds of good men in their hours of darkness and temptation.' Since it is not so much in the development of a problem as in the history of a soul torn by conflicting desires, swayed by alternate hopes and fears, alienated from God by doubt and drawn to Him by love, that the supreme interest lies, the book may be called a psychological drama.

4. The poet is a master of metaphors, taken from many spheres of life. The work of the farm suggests a figure to describe those who sow iniquity and reap trouble, or the comparison of death in a ripe old age to the coming into the barn of the shock of corn in its season. The fate of the wicked is likened to that of the stubble driven by the wind from the threshing-floor or the chaff chased by the storm. Job compares himself in his prosperity to a tree drinking up the water by its roots, while its branches are refreshed by the dew. His words were awaited by the assembly as thirstily as the parched clods look up for the rain. In the long life he then anticipated he compares him-

self to the phœnix. He longs for death as the slave panting under the heat longs for the cool evening which will bring him his rest; or, again, death is sought with the eagerness that characterizes those who dig for hid treasures. The wicked is compared to the Nile grass suddenly cut off from the moisture and withering rapidly; his trust can as little support him as a flimsy spider's web. Man's brief life is like the flower opening in beauty and suddenly cut down, the swiftness with which it passes is illustrated by the weaver's shuttle, the courier, the speed of the light skiffs on the river or of the eagle as it swoops on its prey. The completeness of his disappearance from earth when he passes into Sheol is compared to the vanishing of the cloud.

The book is studded with the most exquisite descriptions. The whole of Yahweh's speech is a sustained effort of the highest genius, unsurpassed in the world's literature. The animal pictures are like instantaneous photographs, catching a characteristic attitude, and fixing it for us in the most vivid words. And with what power and beauty are the marvels of the universe set forth! The laying of its foundation amid the songs of the morning stars and the joyous shouts of the sons of God; the birth of the sea, and the staying of its tumultuous heavenward leap; the punctual dayspring, flooding the world with light; the springs that feed the sea from the nether deep; the gates of Sheol; the dwelling of light and darkness; the stores of hail and snow made ready for God's battles; the sluice cut through the firmament by which the torrential rain descends; the frost that turns the streams to stone; the rain that falls on the waste afar from man; the mighty constellations obedient to God's behest; the lightning with its purposeful movement—all pass before the mind as God unrolls the panorama of the universe. And fully worthy to be mentioned with this is the wonderful description in Bildad's third speech, closing with the awed confession that we stand but at the outskirts of God's ways, where the deafening thunder of His power is mercifully heard from afar. Scarcely less noteworthy than these is the fine description of God's power and wisdom in ix. 5-10. Or take the vision of Eliphaz, where the old terror masters him as he narrates it. How vividly it all passes before us; the preparation in the musings on his night trances; the fear that sets his bones quaking, the cold breath across the face, the hair on end, the vague thing that his straining eyes could resolve into no shape he could name, the dead silence and then the thin voice. Or, for its quiet, soothing beauty, take the peroration to the same speech. And what a sense of peace steals over the weary as he reads the longing words in which Job describes the untroubled calm of Sheol, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. How full of dismay and yearning is the plaintive assertion of the hopelessness of man's fate (xix. 7-21)! How graphic Bildad's picture of the terrors that surround the sinner, and the evil destiny to which he is doomed!

The author's pathos is deeply moving. Job feels acutely the unkindness of his friends; he even turns to them with the appeal, 'Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends.' But it is little that he says to the friends in this strain. It is rather to God that his pathetic pleadings are addressed. 'My friends scorn me, But mine eye poureth out tears unto God.' With such care had God fashioned him, with such kindness preserved him, why does He wantonly destroy him? Soon he must die under God's stroke, but by and by God's present mood will pass, then He will seek for his servant in love, but alas! too late. Especially the swift movement in death elicits some of Job's most touching words, and the thought of the dreary, interminable darkness that awaits him.

5. The poet is known solely from his poem, which is, in a broad sense, a reflex of his mind, a transcript from his life. The Book of Job is autobiographical, as the *Divine Comedy*, *Hamlet*, or *Faust*. The supreme power of the hero's own speeches, as compared with those of the other human *dramatis personæ*, is due to the fact that they are the expression of the writer's personal convictions. His character has that union of simplicity and complexity which is seen in many great personalities. He is a true Jew, as every page of his writing

proves, but a Jew who has so transcended the limits of national particularism that he lays the scene of his drama not in Judæa but in Idumæa.

6. All things seem to combine to point to a comparatively late date for the poem, and the book suits no time better than that of the later years of the Kingdom or the Babylonish Captivity, with the confusion, disaster and hardship which that catastrophe brought with it. Indeed, some have thought that Job is definitely intended to represent the nation, and that his calamities are introduced as a figure of those through which the nation actually passed at this time, while the perplexity and agony of mind into which he was cast by them are a reflection of the perplexity and agony which (as we see from Jeremiah and Ezekiel) so many of the Jews were feeling in consequence of the apparent desertion of His people by God. It has even been maintained that definite allusions to the Captivity and the Restoration may be detected in xii. 18 and xlii. 10. This does not however appear probable. Further, it would seem unlikely that Job is later than Isaiah xl.-lxvi., if, as appears certain, this is to be considered as the work, not of Isaiah of Jerusalem, but of a later prophet writing shortly before the Restoration and the close of the Captivity. The central figure in the pages of this prophet is the 'servant of Jehovah,' and there are certainly striking resemblances between this figure and that of Job. 'Both are innocent sufferers—"my servant Job, a perfect and upright man" (Job i. 8), "my righteous servant" (Is. liii. 11); both are afflicted in a way that strikes horror into the beholders, and causes them to deem them smitten of God (Is. lii. 14; liii. 4, Job *passim*); both are forsaken of men and subjected to mockery and spitting (Job xix. 4ff.; xvi. 10; xxx. 9ff.; Is. i. 6; liii. 3); both are restored and glorified and receive "double," as they both continued faithful, assured that He was near that should justify them (Job xliii. 18; xvi. 19; xix. 25; Is. i. 8).' But there is one very striking difference. A leading thought in the latter part of Isaiah is that of *redemption through suffering*—redemption not of the 'servant' himself, but of others whose 'iniquity' is 'laid upon him.' Now the author of the Book of Job, as we have already seen, is deeply concerned with the theory of suffering; but of *vicarious* suffering, and its redemptive power, as described in 2nd Isaiah, he gives no hint whatever. Surely, then, it is a fair and reasonable inference that he is writing before such noble expression had been given to the grand thought by the great prophet of the Exile. If he had had the thought before him it is inconceivable that he should have ignored it so completely as he has done. More than this we cannot say. It is needless to attempt to fix the date more precisely: and if this cannot be done, it is idle to guess at the author. Happily the interest and value of the book are absolutely independent of all questions of date and authorship. Such have an interest that is almost purely literary; and no dogmatic considerations are affected, whatever may be the conclusion arrived at.

LITERATURE ON THE BOOK OF JOB.

Introductions to the Book of Job will be found in Hastings' *D.B.* by W. T. Davison, in Hastings' *S.D.B.* by W. Taylor Smith, in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* by T. K. Cheyne. See also the Introductions to the Old Testament, books and articles on the Wisdom Literature, and the Commentaries.

The chief critical commentaries are Driver and Gray's in the *International Critical* Series (1921), C. J. Ball's (Clar. Press, 1922), and Morris Jastrow's (Lippincott, 1920). More popular but scholarly are A. B. Davidson's (Camb. Bible), new ed., by H. C. O. Lanchester (1918). J. Strahan's (T. & T. Clark, 1913), A. S. Peake's (*Century Bible,* 1905), E. C. S. Gibson's (*Westminster Comm.,* 1899), and J. Aitken's (*Bible Class Handbooks*).

Expository Lectures worth reading are those of Dean Bradley (Clar. Press, 2nd ed. 1888), J. T. Marshall, *Job and His Comforters,* Joseph Parker in the *People's Bible,* and R.A. Watson in the *Expositor's Bible.* New Translations, annotated, have been made by S. R. Driver (1906), E. G. King (1914), J. F. Genung (1891), and F. H. Wilkinson (1901).

Books on the problem of Job are J. E.

McFadyen's *The Problem of Pain,* A. S. Peake's *The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament,* and T. F. Royds's *Job and the Problem of Suffering.* Essays on the Book are contained in Froude's short studies, Godet's *Old Testament Studies,* Fairbairn's *City of God,* and Butcher's *Harvard Lectures on Greek Subjects.*

The Ideal Man.

Job. i. 1.—'There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job.'

The Book of Job is the history of a great moral struggle and victory. It is the powerful poetic presentment of the ascent of a man's soul from darkness into light, from a narrow and failing creed into a bolder, broader, and truer one. Everything about the book, as it has been said, speaks of a man who had broken from the narrow littleness of the peculiar people. It is in some measure the story of the life of a good man, who lived in days when good and pious men believed that sin and suffering were almost identical terms—that goodness and prosperity always went together.

The writer of the book tries to work out, or at any rate discusses, two questions. The first is the question whether virtue can be disinterested. Can a man be good from other than selfish motives? 'Doth Job serve God for nought?' The second is, 'Is it true that sin and suffering, happiness and virtue are inseparably, inevitably linked with each other in the present order of our human life? Is it true that a man gets just what he deserves, that the man who lives righteously and nobly enters also into all the material advantages of life, that the man who lives badly is swiftly and inevitably overtaken by misfortune and trouble?' In the main the book is worked out with wonderful eloquence and power round these two questions. In his misfortunes Job gives an answer to both questions. He himself is made to prove that a man may be unselfishly good, that he may love the good because it is the good. 'Shall we,' he cries, 'receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.' And again, in his misfortunes he is no less a refutation of that narrow and untrue theory of Providence which identifies well-doing with temporal good fortune and happiness.

It is a great thing to witness the will and faith of a man rising out of its own dead happiness to assert itself unbroken and dominant.

> Glorious among spirits: thus doth strength
> To wisdom, courage and long-suffering love,
> And thee, who art the form they animate,
> Minister like a slave.

It makes the tragedy noble and heart-cleansing when it leaves upon the mind a sense of unconquerable moral power and purity. It is *in* this trial of Job's that we have the vindication of the words which describe him at the beginning of the book: 'a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil.' By a perfect man the poet did not mean a flawless man, but a man true, in the main drift of his life, to what he knew to be right and good, a man in whom the good was dominant. Job was a good man because in him it was the love of good that ruled his life. The bitterest disaster, the keenest suffering could not quench his faith in right or his sense of a living rule of justice. He was one of those fine, high spirits to whom there ariseth light in the darkness. His name is a perpetual memorial of how continually and inextricably virtue is wedded to suffering, and the state of heaven lies near to the keen tribulation of earth. It has always been so.

> The best of men
> That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer;
> A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit,
> The first true gentleman that ever breathed.

Amid all his misfortunes, profoundly as we are moved by them, we feel no pity; for the man was greater than his circumstances, and pity is the tribute that we pay to the weak, not to the strong. Job is the Hebrew ideal of the good man at its highest. Hebrew poetry reached to no grander vision of man's manhood than in the figure of Job. We have in him, as Froude has said, 'a picture of the best

man who could then be conceived'; not a hard, negative, ascetic portrait of possible excellence, but 'a man full of all human loveliness,' to whom God Himself bears the emphatic testimony, that 'there was none like him upon the earth, a perfect and an upright man, who feared God and eschewed evil.'

1. Mark, for one thing, the noble quality of his benevolence. How musically the story of his generous nature is told! 'He was the friend of the poor. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him. He made the widow's heart to sing for joy. "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me! and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me." He was eyes to the blind, and feet was he to the lame. He delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The stranger did not lodge in the street, but he opened his doors to the traveller.'

There is no one of our virtues which in its social effect has more winning influence than the grace of kindness, generosity of temperament. There is a benign influence continually exhaled around it by such a life. Our Christianity arose in a great love, a great generosity; and only as it perpetually re-steeps itself in its primal force and spirit can it keep its constraining potency. A Christianity of deeper kindness, of wider sympathy, of larger generosity, of nobler mercifulness would give to us an evangelical propaganda a thousand times more real and effective than too many things that claim to be such. The grace of a generous spirit has a surprisingly potent attraction about it.

¶ Kindness is a peculiar participation of the spirit of Jesus, which is itself the life of all holiness. It reconciles worldly men to religious people; and really, however contemptible worldly men are in themselves, they have souls to save, and it were much to be wished that devout persons would make their devotion a little less angular and aggressive to worldly people, provided they can do so without lowering practice or conceding principle. Devout people are, as a class, the least kind of all classes. This is a scandalous thing to say; but the scandal of the fact is so much greater than the scandal of acknowledging it, that I will brave this last, for the sake of a greater good. Religious people are an unkindly lot. Poor human nature cannot do everything; and kindness is too often left uncultivated, because men do not sufficiently understand its value. Men may be charitable, yet not kind; merciful, yet not kind; self-denying, yet not kind. If they would add a little common kindness to their uncommon graces, they would convert ten where they now only abate the prejudices of one.[1]

2. Again, we note in the character of Job the fine quality of justice, the love of fair dealing, the spirit of right. It is said of him that he was the father of the oppressed and of those who had none to help them. When he sat as a judge in the market-place, 'Righteousness clothed him there, and his justice was a robe and a diadem.' 'He broke the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth.' He did not despise the cause of his man-servant or his maid-servant when they contended with him, knowing that He who had made him made them.

These words seem to tell us of an ideal prince sitting in judgment—a man like King Arthur, or the historic Alfred, almost the earliest, as he was the best, of our kings—rather than of a grave and wealthy citizen. But, at any rate, they stand for justice, that great quality of strong character, the keystone of the arch which sustains it in strength and beauty. It is a notable thing to meet with a really just man. 'The one Divine work,' says Ruskin, 'is to do justice, and it is the last we are ever inclined to do.'

¶ Lincoln was not a man of ordinary desires, ordinary tastes, ordinary likes and dislikes. He was, for the most part, extraordinary in these respects. He had passions for things, and no passion of his life was stronger than his passion for knowledge, save one. What was that one? His *passion for justice*. . . .

In the spring term of the Tazewell County Court in 1847, Lincoln was employed in several suits, and among them was one of Case vs. Snow Bros. The Snow Bros., as appeared

[1] *The Spirit of Father Faber*, 54.

in evidence (who were both minors), had purchased from an old Mr. Case what was then called a 'prairie team,' consisting of two or three yoke of oxen and a prairie plow, giving therefor their joint note for some two hundred dollars; but when pay-day came refused to pay, pleading the minor act. The note was placed in Lincoln's hands for collection. The suit was called and a jury impanelled. The Snow Bros. did not deny the note, but pleaded through their counsel that they were minors, and that Mr. Case knew they were at the time of the contract and conveyance. All this was admitted by Mr. Lincoln, with his peculiar phrase, 'Yes, gentlemen, I reckon that's so.' The minor act was read and its validity admitted in the same manner. The counsel of the defendants were permitted without question to state all these things to the jury, and to show by the statute that these minors could not be held responsible for their contract. By this time you may well suppose that I began to be uneasy. 'What!' thought I, 'this good old man who confided in these boys to be wronged in this way, and even his counsel, Mr. Lincoln, to submit in silence!' I looked at the court, Judge Treat, but could read nothing in his calm and dignified demeanour. Just then, Mr. Lincoln slowly got up, and in his strange, half-erect attitude and clear, quiet accent began: 'Gentlemen of the jury, are you willing to allow these boys to begin life with this shame and disgrace attached to their character? If you are, I am not. The best judge of human character that ever wrote has left these immortal words for all of us to ponder:

'Good name in man or woman, dear, my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls:
Who steals my purse steals trash: 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands:
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed.

Then rising to his full height, and looking upon the defendants with the compassion of a brother, his long right arm extended towards the opposing counsel, he continued: 'Gentlemen of the jury, these poor innocent boys would never have attempted this low villainy had it not been for the advice of these lawyers.' Then for a few minutes he showed how even the noble science of law may be prostituted. With a scathing rebuke to those who thus belittle their profession, he concluded: 'And now, gentlemen, you have it in your power to set these boys right before the world.' He pleaded for the young men only; I think he did not mention his client's name. The jury, without leaving their seats, decided that the defendants must pay the debt; and the latter, after hearing Lincoln, were as willing to pay it as the jury were determined they should. I think the entire argument lasted not above five minutes.[1]

3. Yet again, in this old Eastern ideal of a noble manhood we note the picture of a wise and good father. It is in the opening chapter of the book that we are told something of Job and his family, of his care and solicitude for them, of his wise oversight of them, of his tender regard for their well-being. He thought for them; he prayed for them. Early in the morning each day this good man remembered in his prayers the children that had been given to him. Thus did Job continually. It is a picture, few and brief as are the touches which describe it, of a domestic life overshadowed by a noble fatherhood.

Among the vital conditions of our social and national well-being the first and most central is the purity and sweetness of our home life. All the virtue and valour of a nation's manhood depend upon this home life. It is the fathers and mothers of the land, more than our statesmen and lawmakers, who are answerable for our national greatness and our national purity. As we have grown up in our homes, as we have learned from the words and ways of those who had care of us, as we have been taught of them in ways of truth and honour or otherwise, so we have largely come to be. More than words, more than precepts, more than wise maxims, is the habitual

[1] R. M. Wanamaker, *The Voice of Lincoln*, 28, 102.

atmosphere of the family life, and the deep, silent influence of example, to shape the future life and character.

¶ The home was an exceptionally happy one, a genuine 'House Beautiful' devoted to 'the relief and security of pilgrims.' To both father and mother the Christian life was a very real thing, indeed the most real part of all life, talked about freely and naturally, but acted and lived out still more freely and fully. The spending of self was counted as nothing, the helping of others a matter of course. For instance, the mother heard casually of a young foreign governess in a school, who, just as the spring holidays were about to begin, had news of the sudden tragic death of her only brother, and who was to spend her holidays in the empty school with this grief as her only companion. She was an absolute stranger with but a scanty knowledge of English, but response to her need seemed the only thing possible. 'Of course she must come to us for the holidays'—and so a life-long friendship was begun. 'I was a stranger and ye took me in.' It was in this atmosphere that Arthur grew and developed from childhood to manhood.[1]

4. Once more, Job was a man of prayer and a man who prayed for others. Here we see that the character of Job was capable of development. Two prayers are mentioned. In the first Job prayed for his family (Job i. 5); in the second he prayed for his friends (xlii. 10). Prayer not only distinguishes the good man from the bad, but also marks the grades of character in a good man. Job was always unimpeachable in his integrity, irreproachable in his conduct, merciful in his spirit; but he was a very different man at the last from what he was at the first. His trial was not a test of the firmness of character already won; nor was it sent merely to confirm him in his character; it was sent to develop a higher quality of character. The kind of man he was, and the kind of man he became, are indicated in these two prayers.

Nothing really opens the mind and heart of man but suffering. The law, or its analogy, is wrought into all nature, and at last God is presented to us suffering in His Son. A man cannot think his way into large sympathy with his fellow-men. No study, no effort of will, no practice of benevolence, can bring us into a true humanity. While we are prosperous and happy, we think chiefly of ourselves. Imagination, even, cannot overleap the walls of happy circumstances. We must suffer in ourselves before we can truly love others, and we must suffer greatly before we can love widely. Suffering alone will sting and spur this sacred feeling into genuine activity. Why it is so, we may not be able to tell, unless it be that only thus do we gain a thorough knowledge of ourselves. A heavy sickness will teach one more psychology than all the books can. Getting thus some true and full sense of self, and finding out what a precious thing the soul is, and how it can feel and suffer and rejoice, we reach a path that leads divinely to others. There is in the heart of man a secret chamber where God has put all humanity, and Himself also: touch its door with the hand of suffering and it flies open, and man finds himself one with all others, and God Himself in the midst of them. This is the truth of the Incarnation: hence the Lamb of God eternally slain; hence He who loved the whole world could love it only by suffering in and with and for it.

In these two ways Job reminds us of Christ. As Job was from the first spoken of as perfect, and yet, as we see, reached at the end a perfection which was on a higher plane, so Jesus is said to have increased in wisdom. Again, as Job reached the higher plane of his perfection through suffering, so of Jesus it is said that He was made perfect through suffering. Thus are we led in the very opening of this book to Him of whom all the poets as well as all the prophets write.

[1] Mrs. Dugald Christie, *Jackson of Moukden*, 6.

The Ideal Home.

Job i. 5.—'And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them. . . . Thus did Job continually.'

WHATEVER may be the age or the place of this story, it opens with a delightful picture that

would fit in with any time and any surroundings. The writer belongs to somewhere in the East, some centuries before Christ, but he might be describing a phase of life in the West in the more recent Christian centuries. It is the happy picture of a prosperous, affectionate, religious household.

¶ I have in my mind such a picture in the life of a Yorkshire home. The head of the home, a prosperous mill-owner, had begun life as a working lad in the mill which he came at last to own, or rather, in its small predecessor. He had retained all his simplicity of character and manners, and was still called by his Christian name by men who in past days had worked by his side and were now in his employ. His house and furniture were designed rather for comfort than for show. His wife, who shared his simple tastes, knew every millworker's family, and was their true friend in any time of trouble. The children of the household were brought up with simple tastes, and their amusements were truly homely. The family pew in the big chapel near at hand was filled twice on Sunday. Indeed, it was on Sunday that the free, peaceful, affectionate atmosphere of the home was best realized. Children and grandchildren gathered under the one roof, and the simple affection and frankness were delightful to witness. . . . This first chapter of Job has always seemed to me to contain a picture of an ancient instance of that delightful home life.[1]

1. In all Job's affection and confidence towards his children there was just one fear in his mind concerning them. He feared lest in their enjoyment of life they might have forgotten God. That dread shows a deep knowledge of the peculiar temptations of prosperity, and it also shows that the moral conditions of our life are just what they were centuries ago, when Moses warned the people in these words: 'Lest, when ye have eaten and are full, ye forget the Lord your God.' The descendants of many a home just now have turned their backs upon the simple piety which made the strong characters from whom their prosperity came. Another Book of Job might be written in which the children are not killed, but live, and are tested by prosperity—to some natures a harder test than adversity.

[1] W. Hardy Harwood.

¶ All round London there is a vast and spreading circle of villadom. A few years ago these suburbs were the strongholds of family life. Here lived people who mocked the extravagances of fashionable society, and were blissfully unaware of its deeper iniquities. The husbands went by train to the City; the house-proud wives remained at home with the children. The life of each little community centred in the home, and had its circumference in the parish, of which they were proud and in which they worked. You found benevolence there, a sense of neighbourly responsibility, a desire for mental improvement, above all things, self-sacrifice for the sake of the children.

To-day, many of these women go to London almost as regularly as their husbands go to the City. They are spoken of as 'Season Ticket Women.' Their excuse is the shop—their attraction is the restaurant. They have contracted a passion for crowds, for adventures, for excitement. They knock about with other people who are knocking about. In a garish restaurant, with an orchestra playing dance music, and crowds of people waiting for tables, they light their cigarettes, drink their liqueurs, and feel that they are at the very centre of fashionable life.[1]

2. The wish that was behind Job's fear was that the whole of this prosperous life might be purified and chastened by the sense of responsibility to God. It is that sense which has made the healthiest and, in the true meaning of the word, the holiest lives that we have known. True life consists not in narrowing it all down to the point of the least possible temptation; that was the error of some of the Puritans and of all the people who retire into monasteries and convents. Jesus Christ distinctly repudiated that conception of life. He set Himself in direct contrast with the ascetic John the Baptist; He came eating and drinking. And yet, as we watch His life, how clear it is that He never allowed any of the gifts of

[1] *The Glass of Fashion*, 150.

life to master Him. He was always the King of all appetites, and all powers were His subjects. It is the only true ideal of life. The monastic idea, with its tremendous concentration of will and activity upon continuous religious exercises, is surely a tragedy of wasted opportunity. Noble motives, great passions that might have been translated into a life of vast usefulness to the sad and sinful and suffering are given to a ceaseless self-introspection and the performance of an endless ritual. Such people say they are happy, and the faces of some of them confirm it, but it is the happiness of the pet bird in its cage as compared with the happiness of blue skies and vast open spaces. Quite another kind of happiness was intended for those who soar to celestial heights of service and of sacrifice, and that is the happiness of people who live their life in all its fullness, and in everything bring God into the reckoning, seeking in all relationships to be the unselfish servants of Truth, and Right, and Goodness. To live the life and to keep God in the heart, that is the ideal, and the fear of Job was lest his children should have fallen below that ideal.

There is an expression in the Frst Epistle to the Corinthians which at one time was frequently on the lips of religious people: 'Those that use the world as not abusing it'; but in the margin of the Revised Version you will find a stronger translation: 'Those that use the world as not using it to the full.' That sets us, perhaps, the most difficult task in the world, but one that can be achieved if the chief force in our life be the power of the love of God in our hearts. The author of the Book of Job evidently believed in the possibility of such a full and noble use of the gifts of life; how much more should we, in these Christian days, cherish such a belief when we have learned of Jesus Christ the great secret of the strongest moral power the world has ever known.

3. There was never a day that Job omitted to pray, or forgot to offer sacrifice, or allowed his faith and repentance to be interrupted in their exercise. The duties and exercises of religion were in his case never intermittent: 'thus did Job continually.' Would that the same could be said of us! Henceforth let me be regular in devotion, instant in prayer, persevering in Bible study, and by 'patient *continuance* in well-doing' let me achieve glory, honour, and immortality.

To do a thing once or twice is easy, but to do it this day, and every day, and all the days—this is the trial and the difficulty. To meet a crisis is one thing, to keep doggedly through the long dreary hours at monotonous duties is another. Many can summon up their strength for a special effort, who soon grow tired of the daily task. It is easier to rise to the occasion in some supreme moment than to plod over the dreary plateaux of monotonous labour and uneventful routine. In all true Christian living the regular heartbeat is preferable to the spasm, and the steady pull counts for more than the rush or the spurt: 'thus did Job continually.'

¶ We go to our prayers by chance or order, or by determination of accidental occurrences; and we recite them as we read a book; and sometimes we are sensible of the duty, and a flash of lightning makes the room bright; and our prayers end, and the lightning is gone, and we as dark as ever. We draw our water from standing pools, which never are filled but with sudden showers, and therefore we are dry so often.[1]

Feasting and Forgetting.

Job i. 5.—'And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them . . . for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and renounced God in their hearts.'

We are here introduced to a happy family scene. 'Now his sons used to hold feasts day about, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.' But this perpetual round of gaiety was not without its perils, and Job—whom we may think of as a man past middle life, as he has grown-up sons with houses of their own—is fearful lest his happy children may be tempted to forget or ignore or defy the claims of religion.

[1] Jeremy Taylor.

So 'when the cycle of feasts was over, Job used to send for them, and prepare them for worship, rising early and offering burnt-offerings for them all.' May we detect in this any reflection of the criticism which seldom fails to be meted out to the rising generation by their soberer elders? However that may be, it is plain that Job is a man of the most scrupulous piety. Like a good father who bears upon his conscience the burden of his children's welfare, he individualizes them: not content with a single offering for all, he makes an offering for each. He is priest of his family, not in name only, but in deed and in truth. He knows how easy it is for the young and light-hearted to go astray, especially when in jovial mood, and to trespass the bounds of religious decorum; and he will take no risks where his children are concerned, 'for,' he said,

> 'Perchance my children have sinned
> And cursed God in their heart.'

He does not know for certain, but *perhaps* they have; and that is enough. Behind the outward rite we see Job's deep and earnest anxiety for the honour of his God and the spiritual welfare of his children, even after they are grown up and have homes of their own.

Festivity has its dangers, its special danger being forgetfulness of God.

1. First, there is a temptation to be more than commonly hasty and perfunctory in our strictly religious duties. We find it more difficult to compose our thoughts for prayer, or to feel an interest in reading the Bible. We venture to think that God, who knows our circumstances, will make allowance for this. Perhaps our time for prayer is really contracted by other engagements, unless we can follow our Lord's example and shorten our night a little for the sake of redeeming time for devotion. And then at such times we are more than commonly weary, so that against this we see a good reason, as for that we saw a good excuse. But it is the flagging interest, even more than the failing time, that is the real danger for us.

Note the way in which Job describes the thing that he fears: 'renouncing God in the heart.' It is quite possible that there are men who would never dream of renouncing God with their lips, and who imagine that God has His due place in their opinions, who none the less in heart refuse His direction and control. That is precisely the temptation of a prosperous life, either in the individual or in the nation. They have all that heart can wish—comfort, enjoyments, delightful homes, troops of friends, success in business, good health—but God has no real place in all these things. They neglect worship for the golf course or the motor ride; they say their prayers when there is time to do that and get breakfast as well by the time of the morning train, but as a matter of simple fact, God does not count in their life; they do not need Him. Then, when trouble comes, they turn to God and seek His help. Is it fair? Should we treat an earthly friend so? In His great compassion He lets us come to Him even under these conditions, but we must not play with His long-suffering and mercy. If we come to Him in days of trouble it must be with the resolve that we shall be as loyal when the happy days come again. We must cultivate such a spirit of trust and obedience towards God that we shall put Him first, whether the times are smooth or rough.

2. In the second place, the world at such times asserts its importance, and would persuade us of its alone reality. This is at times the meaning of what we call sins of the world, as distinguished from those of the flesh and of the devil. It is a very subtle snare, but on that very account the more dangerous. Thousands and tens of thousands are involved in it—this misplacing of things of time in comparison with the things of eternity. That which is looks so real, so tangible, so infallibly true, and that which shall be is so easily covered up, disguised, at last practically denied, that a man who takes no real pains with his soul is almost sure to live for this world and to forget or disregard the next.

¶ A recent ride upon a Fifth Avenue bus threatened to waste time. The talk of two women, however, whose conversation was too

plainly audible to be escaped, made it well worth while. They were bosom friends, and in an hour's tête-à-tête they gave a comprehensive résumé of their characters.

They loved to play bridge, and they played it, apparently, a good deal of the time. They were gambling at it. To be sure, one of them had had some trouble with her husband, who, having been brought up a Presbyterian, had scruples about gambling. 'But,' she had said to him, 'you see that we must give up the game if we do not gamble.' So he had come over just recently. They were all gambling now and were happy. They loved the theatre, especially musical comedies. They loved to dance, and evidently, when they were not playing bridge, dancing was their chief diversion. They loved their automobile trips, and as for dress, how shall a mere man report their conversation about that? One listened to see if any other interest in life would be revealed, but this was all. Their talk had struck bottom.

These women live in one of the most needy and critical generations in history, when a shaking civilization is striving desperately to get on its feet again, when there are great enterprises to serve, great books to read, great thoughts to think; and yet their lives, like a child's doll, are stuffed with sawdust. They represent in an extreme form one of the commonest failures in character—the crowding out of things that really matter by things that do not matter much. They are absorbingly busy with trivialities. They have missed the primary duty and privilege of life—putting first things first.[1]

3. Times of feasting are apt to be also selfish times. When once our thoughts are more of pleasure than of duty, we must be selfish. We may be selfish about duties; we are almost sure to be so about pleasures. Each one of us, when he is for the time living in a worldly, godless manner, may be quite sure that it is not the love of his neighbour that is putting aside the love of God: those two things ever go together, charity and godliness. When God is forgotten we may be almost sure it is self, and nothing better, that is remembered.

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 1.

¶ A man who has persistently given himself to the pursuit of his own pleasure or advantage, regardless of the claims of others and in scorn of the law of duty, loses the power to understand the dignity of service either to God or man. He shows no pity to others and receives no mercy for himself, till he is unable to recognize the tender grace of brotherhood, and in hardness of heart becomes a beast of prey against human life.[1]

O doom beyond the saddest guess,
As the long years of God unroll
To make thy dreary selfishness
The prison of a soul![2]

The Satan.

Job i. 6.—'Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.'

In these words we are transported from the plains of Uz to the halls of Heaven. There, like an oriental sovereign, Jehovah holds His court.

Notice the significance of this scene. It sets the poem at once on a high place. And our thoughts may go for a moment from these sacred pages to the Milton or the Dante of another age. Shakespeare does not rise to such grandeur. His kingdom was of this world, and, though nothing human was strange to him, he concerned himself little with the Divine. The Beatrice of the *Paradiso*, the chained Titan of the Caucasus, were figures he could never have limned. He could depict the love of a Juliet, but not that of a Theresa; he understood the doubts of Hamlet, but not the certainty of St. Francis. Even the Devil of Milton was hardly within his scope, or the cosmic brevity of 'Doth Job serve God for nought?'

¶ Apparently at stated seasons the sons of God come to the heavenly assembly to give Yahweh a report of the way in which their duties have been performed. Each probably has his fixed province, since it was thought that each kingdom had its own angel-prince

[1] *The Spirit of Man;* Essays from *The Times*, ii. 87.

[2] Whittier.

(Dan. x. 13, 20, 21, xii. 1.; Is. xxiv. 21, 22). They are regarded as responsible for the order of their provinces, hence they are condemned for the misgovernment that prevails in the world, as in the apocalyptic passage in Isaiah just quoted, and in Pss. lviii, lxxxii. The term 'sons of God' suggests a wrong idea to the English reader. The meaning is not that they are sons of God, or servants of God. 'Sons of the Elohim' means those who possess the Elohim nature, those who belong to the order of Elohim, supernatural, spiritual beings, just as 'sons of men' means those who belong to the human order, and 'sons of the prophets' members of the prophetic order. Morally, they are not regarded as more perfect than men; rather they may be described as morally neutral, our distinction between good and evil angels being unknown. Thus the sons of the Elohim contract unions with the daughters of men (Gen. vi. 1-4), from which unions spring the Nephilim. So the spirit who in Micaiah's striking vision becomes a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets to entice the king to his death is a member of the heavenly host. Since, with the exception of the Satan, these sons of the Elohim have no further significance for his story, the author does not linger on what passes between them and Yahweh, but goes on at once to the conversation between Yahweh and the Satan.

'Satan came also,' or the Opposer, or the Adversary, as in the margin. The Heb. is *the satan,* where the presence of the article shows that the word has not yet become a proper name as it has in 1 Chron. xxi. 1. The word 'Satan' means one who opposes another in his purpose (Num. xxii. 22, 32), or pretensions and claims (Zech. iii. 1; 1 Kings xi. 14, 23, 25). It may be used of human agents, *e.g.* David (1 Sam. xxix. 4), or Hadad (1 Kings xi. 14). The Satan is that one of God's ministers whose part it is to oppose men in their pretensions to a right standing before God (Zech. iii. 1, and here); that is, one who represents God's trying, sifting providence. He is one of God's messengers, and presents himself before God to report, or to receive commissions to execute.

God's providence is over all; He does whatsoever is done in heaven or on earth. But He makes use of agents in His operations. Hence the same act, such as instigating David to number the people, may be in one place ascribed to God directly (2 Sam. xxiv. 1), and in another to Satan (1 Chron. xxi. 1). God's purposes are usually beneficent and gracious, hence the angels are comprehensively designated as 'ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them who shall inherit salvation' (Heb. i. 14). But He has also purposes of judgment and chastisement, which are executed by those called the 'destroyers' (Job xxxiii. 22; Exod. xii. 23). In all these operations, whether of mercy or of judgment, the angels are simply servants. They do God's behests. Their own moral character does not come into question. They are neither good nor bad angels. The spirit from the Lord that troubled Saul is called 'evil' (1 Sam. xvi. 14ff.), not in reference to his own character, but to the effect produced on Saul's mind. In like manner, the spirit that came forth and undertook to delude Ahab to his destruction was not a false spirit in himself; he merely became a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets (1 Kings xxii. 19ff.). In all such cases the spirit is characterized according to the influence which he exerts. Neither is the Satan represented here as a fallen or evil spirit. Yet undoubtedly a step towards this is taken. He shows an assiduity too keen in the exercise of his somewhat invidious function. He usurps the initiative in marking out Job for trial. The author lets us know that this is his view of him when he puts into God's mouth the words: 'Thou movedst me against him' (ii. 3). And in the parallel passage (Zech. iii. 1f.) his cold-blooded cruelty in the exercise of his office against the miserable, and, in a moral sense, the somewhat ragged, Church of the Restoration stands rebuked before the spirit of Divine compassion: 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; . . . is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?' Subsequent revelation made advances on the doctrine of Satan.[1]

[1] A. B. Davidson and H. C. O. Lanchester, *Job* (Camb. Bible), 8f.

What lessons has a text such as this for us?

1. There is a Satan lying in wait to taint with evil the holy exercises of our religion in contemplation and devotion. In the atmosphere of worldly temptation we take heed to ourselves, for we know that the enemy is near. There are Satanic areas where we know Satan has laid his snares, and we look well to our going. In the ribald throng and in the fevered worship of Mammon we recognize the presence of the dark god of this world, and we do battle against the noxious atmosphere, and slack not our fight against the visible Satan that threatens us. But we do not expect Satan to appear among the angels and in our holy places, and so we are off our guard.

¶ Martin Luther tried to be perfect. But the devil said to him, 'Martin, you'll be a sinner as long as you live.' That led him to the necessity of going away somewhere where he would find it easier to keep out of sin's way. But even the cloister can be the devil's roosting-place. Martin found there was no refuge but Christ.[1]

2. There is a Satan ever ready to simulate the holiest forms. Satan came among the sons of God. He was detected and separated from them only by the eye of the all-discerning God. It is by such disguise, by this process of Satanic simulation, that the Christian religion has been from time to time mingled and corrupted with pernicious error. Untruth has changed itself into the form of truth. Satan has put on the likeness of the angels. The devotion of the soul has been corrupted into the attitudinal reverence of æsthetic forms. Repentance has been degraded into imitative penance. The sovereignty of Christ is mimicked in the sovereignty of an ecclesiastic. The keys of the Kingdom of Heaven have been recast to fit the ambitions of secular and political dominion. The grace of God has had its superficial likeness inscribed on the tablets of priestly ordinances and government. Such errors have simulated the sacred image of truth, and have masqueraded as things of light.

[1] *John Brown Paton*, 362.

¶ One illustration of the same insidious disguise of error is found in the wide-spread descent of the Christian pulpit of to-day from the spiritual standard of the gospel. The Church is asked to concern itself fundamentally with the material concerns of men, to help to make this earth a material paradise. We are confidently told that this is a larger and truer gospel. But when we find that the ideals of human life are being lowered—that the pulpit is descending from the splendour of its message of spiritual salvation, that the multitude are being taught to strive for the things of the present world rather than for the kingdom of the spirit—we have good cause to fear that the subtlety of the Satanic presence has insinuated itself among the sons of God.[1]

3. This skilfully disguised Satan not only deadens or paralyses the spiritual energy of the Church, but actually makes the Church the instrument of its deception of the world. However men may rail at the Church of Christ and at Christian ministers, the world recognizes at heart the unique position and power of the Church of Christ. They may be loath to rise to its great spiritual demands, but they are swift to respond to its unspiritual concessions. The course of untruth becomes swift when the Church is the leader in it. The world will run riot into worldliness and materialism and unbelieving rationalism if the Church gives the slightest sanction to it. The subtlest Satan is that which corrupts the temple of God, for from that demoralized centre it is easy to corrupt all the rest of the city of humanity.

Surely it is clear that against such a danger as this the Church of Christ should be constantly on its guard. Its purity and truth are a matter of life and death for the world. We must prove all things, and not hastily run in the way of human wisdom or of human impatience. The one of these would corrupt the single gospel of redeeming love, and annihilate the God of miracles. The other would lower the standard of our spiritual ideals, and seek to win the multitude through the wide gate and the broad way of material satisfac-

[1] G. Thomas.

tion. Judgment in time and eternity begins at the house of God.

¶ A religion that cannot be trusted to direct men aright in civic, national and international affairs is not fitted to be a principle and law of action in any relation of life.[1]

The Evidence of Character.

Job i. 8.—'Hast thou considered my servant Job?'

To every unbeliever God says, 'Hast thou considered my servant Job?' To every reasonable man or woman now standing, hesitating, at the frontier of His Kingdom, not sure whether Christianity is not a semi-hypocrisy, a delusion, a mere amiable fanaticism, or perhaps, after all, the great message of love from the Unseen to mankind God says: Hast thou considered My servant who lived in the next street to thee for so many years? Thou heardest the story of his wild and sinful youth, how he recovered himself and gave himself to the saving of the orphan and the homeless, and gained the honour and love of all good men. Whence came that change? How did he gain that power? Hast thou considered My servant?

Christianity is not a mere bundle of statements and dogmas to be learned from a book. It is based on facts. Here is one of them: Men and women around us who were once frivolous, selfish, and base have been changed and ennobled by some inward influence. For years they have lived a changed life. We say, and they say, Christ did it. They say, and we say, that in the story of Jesus there is an appeal from God to every sinner's heart; that in Jesus there is an offer of forgiveness from God for every sin, that from Jesus power may be received to battle with and master every sin; that the lives of men made noble, useful, pure, heroic when they became Christian are the evidences of the truth of that claim. Hast thou considered My servant?

1. Character bears witness to religion. The real faith, not the profession necessarily, but the real inner faith which men have in God or about God, comes to light sooner or later in their conduct and their habits. If we find men selfish, corrupt, dishonest, we can surely infer one of two things: either that pure and noble religious teaching has come to them and they have never understood and assimilated it, or that the religion they do receive and assimilate is itself corrupt and pernicious. Or, reversing the assertion, when we meet with a man like Wesley, or like Livingstone, we may be certain that he has assimilated in his inmost being some of the purest truth of God. And this should be admitted about all religions and all ages.

¶ The character of Buddha is an unanswerable argument to the moral worth, to the truth, to be found in primitive Buddhism. The character of Marcus Aurelius is the finest justification of Stoicism the ancient world produced. Epicureanism gave the world no Aurelius, no Epictetus. That is its crushing condemnation. That is the proof it was lacking in the truth of God. We may say hard things against the Church of Rome, with perfect truth up to a certain point; but, so long as that Church throws up men like Pascal and Father Damien, it were hopeless to deny that Christ has not left her yet. By their fruits ye shall know them. Not that all beliefs which produce good men are wholly true; but all beliefs, honestly received and wrought out in life, which raise men and purify men and inspire men do contain some truth, do put men in contact with the Spirit of God. No moral inspiration or cleansing ever yet came from an untruth. Reaction against wickedness may hasten and intensify reform. But falsehood never produces righteousness. The corrupting matter lying on the fields may fertilize the soil, but the harvest of righteousness cannot spring from corruption but only from living seed—truth. And this is one great evidence, perhaps the greatest of all evidences, of the truth of Christianity.[1]

2. By what means, then, may our character serve the cause of Christ? For, when we take the hint given in the text and consider the character of God's servants, we see more than

[1] *John Hunter, D.D.*, 209.

[1] J. M. Witherow.

a witness to religion. There are Christians, good, pure, upright, whose influence is very small, and disappears completely when they die. That of a few is enormous and abides years after they are gone. What is the explanation of this difference? Some of God's people, of course, may have splendid intellectual or artistic gifts, or exalted social position, and so tell upon many lands and many generations. But, among Christian people of ordinary gifts and ordinary position, why is there so much difference in the witness they bear to the living Christ? One is a robuster, more vigorous, more useful member of the church than another, even when their talents and opportunities are fairly equal. Why is that?

The answer is that character is far from being an unalterable quality. Christ gives a man a new character, but the man having received it can develop it, and ought to develop it. Some men and women have discovered and practised this development, and some have only a glimmering of their own opportunities. But how can the Christian character be developed?

(1) First, by *knowledge*—knowledge of ourselves, knowledge of a moral and spiritual ideal, knowledge of God's will. No plant will grow without nutrition from the soil and from the air. No animal will grow without daily wholesome food. And every day we must have food for the conscience and the will. Knowledge is offered us in this Book of God, in the duties of common life, in the moments of self-examination. But we must seek it, we must assimilate it, or we shall never grow. Some boys and girls are attending the finest schools in England, but are not learning. Some grown-up children are in God's school, but are to a large extent wasting their time. If we read our Bibles more regularly, and more intelligently, if we said to ourselves more earnestly at the beginning of each day's work: 'How ought I to work this day?' if we steadily fed our consciences with a pure moral ideal, if we always observed and welcomed God's light on life—our characters would grow—grow in strength and in beauty.

(2) And then—labour, exercise, activity, *practice*. That is the second essential of moral development. Every golfer knows, for instance, that no reading of books on golf, no watching of the finest players, will, by itself, make a golfer. If one wants to be a golfer, one must golf. And, if we want to be strong vigorous Christians we must put our knowledge into work for Christ. There are too many in every church who are waiting for something attractive to be found for them to do. If there is nothing attractive, let us take up something unattractive and do it for Christ's sake. We may very soon come to like it far more than we should expect. To be idle, to be unemployed, means that our moral muscles are becoming flabby. That is a law of God from which there is no escape.

(3) Lastly, character grows by *worship*, by communion with the unseen, by personal intercourse with God. Every tree must grow downwards in the dark, if it is to grow upwards into the light. Every soul must have a vigorous secret life if there is to be a visible development in usefulness. 'The nurse of full-grown souls is Solitude,' says Lowell, and he describes the solitude—

> If the chosen soul could never be alone
> In deep mid-silence, open-door'd to God,
> No greatness ever had been dream'd or done.

Secret prayer, secret fellowship with the Master, that is what will purify our ideals, that is what will comfort and renew us after a breakdown, that is what will give us eternal hope, and eternal strength. Let us lay to heart the Master's word to the disciples who were about to see the great crisis of His life, and to prove unequal to companionship with Him in that terrible moment, to their own lasting sorrow and discredit: 'Could ye not watch with me one hour?' Ah, if they had done that, they might not immediately after have forsaken Him and fled. Could we not watch with Him for one hour?

¶ As showing the communion from which he drew his strength for the constant service demanded of him, let me flash a momentary picture on the screen.

One night Hill was staying with me. The usual heavy round of unceasing duties sent us

wearied to our beds, and ere long I fell asleep. He occupied the next room to mine, and the French windows of our rooms opened on to the verandah with its outer venetian shutters. After some hours of sleep I awoke, to see a broad band of light upon the venetians opposite me. Fearing fire, I went out on the verandah and looked into his room, from which the light was streaming. The lamp was burning on a table by his bedside; his Greek Testament and notebook lay open. After the day's work he had spent the hours in inmost quiet communion with the Word, till, to end all, he knelt to commend his soul to God in prayer. But, worn out with work, he fell asleep upon his knees, and as the gray morning dawned he was still kneeling as he slept. No strain of daily toil, no weariness, was allowed to justify curtailment of that gazing into the face of Incarnate Love whereby he renewed his strength.[1]

The Devil's Slander.

Job i. 9, 10.—'Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side?'

The name 'Satan' corresponds to the Greek *diabolos,* which is our devil, and the word really means 'accuser,' 'slanderer,' 'calumniator.' In this episode Satan acts in keeping with his name. He calumniates Job. He sneers at him. He is the accuser of the brethren. He insinuates his doubts as to the genuineness of Job's piety. Doth Job fear God for nought? His piety was assumed from interested motives.

That is one of the penalties of an evil heart—the man with the evil heart cannot believe in goodness. The heart is the organ of moral vision; the man who looks out on the world through the medium of an evil heart is like a man who looks out upon Nature through coloured glasses—every thing takes on the dark colour of the medium through which he looks. Selfish men find it hard, not to say impossible, to believe in disinterested love. Miserly men find it hard to believe that generosity is genuine. Profligate men find it hard to believe in the reality of chastity. Men make their own world. They people the world with reproductions of themselves. They look into their own hearts and write. The motives that animate them are the motives they impute to other people. The consequence is that the man with an evil heart lives in an evil world. He does not believe in goodness. And if he is confronted with some specimen of the good man, he suggests that his goodness is a cloak, a pretence, a deceit, a sham. So the evil man is always an accuser of his brethren. It is the sinner and not the saint who maligns mankind. The bitterest cynicisms, the foulest slanders, the cruellest libels ever uttered against mankind have been the cynicisms, slanders, and libels uttered by evil men. A good man finds it easy enough to believe in goodness. The pure in heart see God—they see God in their fellows. The purest and holiest Man who ever lived was the One who thought most highly of men. He saw good in the most unexpected places. He saw it in the publican, the harlot, the thief. But the bad man banishes love, goodness, generosity, purity from the world. He can find no room for them. Appetite, lust, passion, greed, selfishness—these, according to him, are the only motives that really govern men. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Satan, who is the incarnate spirit of evil, a slanderer of mankind. In uttering this slander upon Job he is acting in strict accord with his own character. He tells God he doesn't believe in the 'perfect and upright man.' There is no such thing, he says, as genuine goodness and disinterested piety. And as for this non-such Job—he was pious only because he thought it paid. If his prosperity were suddenly taken away from him, his piety would vanish at the same time and he would renounce God to His face. Job was no exception to the rule. Self-interest was the motive even of his piety, 'Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not set an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?'

Now, if you will look carefully at those

[1] W. T. A. Barber, *David Hill,* 101.

words, you will see that Satan makes a two-fold charge with respect to Job's religion. He says (1) that it is a religion based on self-interest. He says (2) that his religion is dependent on his circumstances.

1. Satan's first insinuation against Job's piety is that it is all *a matter of self interest.* 'Doth Job fear God for nought?' The insinuation conveyed by that sneer is that Job was religious for what he could get out of it. He was good, not because he really loved goodness, but because he thought goodness paid. 'Goodness is remunerative—that is why Job is good,' sneered Satan. And I am bound to add that there was a good deal in the old Jewish way of talking about religion that justified the sneer. In the Old Testament immense stress is laid on the *rewards of religion.* 'Be good,' is the style of many an Old Testament exhortation, 'and you shall be rich; be good, and you shall be prosperous; be good, and your land shall be fruitful, and your wealth shall increase on every side.' The philosophy of life held by the Jews was that taught in the conventional story-book of to-day, in which the bad characters always meet with a bad end, while the good always get married and live happily ever after. In the Old Testament temporal disaster is threatened as the punishment of sin, while worldly prosperity is promised as the reward of goodness. And, as a result of that emphasis, in the case of very many religion was regarded as little more than a means of getting on in the world. They were religious *because they thought it paid.* And although the Jews in the Old Testament times interpreted the relation between religion and prosperity in far too narrow a way, and in far too materialistic terms—religion *does pay.* Here is a New Testament verse on the point: 'Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.' 'Godliness is profitable,' the Apostle says. It is profitable in this life. It creates those qualities which tend to produce commercial success—for it makes men diligent, conscientious, trustworthy. It brings men the respect and honour of their fellows—for, in the long run, it is to *character* men pay homage. And in the world to come godliness finds its full and final justification, for there the reward comes in the shape of a blessedness which such figures as the crown and the palm branch and the white robe but feebly and inadequately convey. *Godliness is profitable.* And there is something in us that says it is right that it should be so.

But while godliness inevitably brings reward, the reward is not the reason why we should be godly. We are in a very elementary state of religion, if indeed we are religious at all, if we are religious only *for the sake of the reward.* Religion may possibly begin at that point. In the Evangelical Revival, *e.g.,* the desire to escape the wrath to come and to make sure of heaven was the starting-point of religion with multitudes. But religion must get beyond that point if it is to be a religion worthy of the name. We have an old proverb to the effect that 'honesty is the best policy.' In that proverb is expressed the verdict of mankind drawn from centuries of experience, that *honesty pays.* But we are a long way from being honest men if we are honest only as a matter of policy. We are not truly honest men until we are honest whether it pays or whether it does not pay—just because *honesty is right.* And it is like that with religion. Religion is profitable—but we are not religious men if we are religious only because it is profitable; we are truly religious only when we love religion *for its own sake.* Our goodness is a mere make-believe so long as we are good only as a matter of policy; we are not truly good until goodness becomes our delight, our passion, our joy. We are not true Christians so long as we follow Christ only for what we can get, any more than were those Galilean crowds who followed Him for a short time because they ate of the loaves and were filled. We are Christians only when we follow Christ for His own dear sake, because He Himself is so infinitely lovely that we would rather go with Him to prison and to death than have a world without Him. Godliness *is* profitable—but we are not to be godly for the sake of the profit.

¶ I read in the *Times* a short time ago Mr. Winston Churchill's article upon Lord Fisher

and Sir Arthur Wilson. What he says about the latter illustrates, I think, the true Christian attitude towards rewards. Sir Arthur Wilson's great word, Mr. Churchill says, was *duty*. It was the one thing he thought about —*duty*. It was the one idea that regulated all his action—*duty*. He paid no heed to difficulty or danger on the one hand, or to possible reward on the other; he kept a single eye for duty. Duty was to be done for its own sake. Well, honour came to this man who worshipped so whole-heartedly at duty's shrine. Command of the fleet and the First Sea-Lordship of the Admiralty, they came to him in time—but they came unsought. He did not do his duty for the sake of the honours; he did his duty because he loved it, and the honours came.

That is how it ought to be with the real Christian. The Christian is not a man who obeys Christ because he wants heaven at the finish. The Christian is a man who obeys Christ because he loves Him, and to him heaven naturally and inevitably comes. If you will read the Gospels carefully, you will see that is Christ's thought of the real Christian. He wants men to follow Him out of pure love for Himself, and not for what they might hope to escape or to gain. In His appeals to men He had little to say about the rewards of the service, though He had a great deal to say about its difficulties. He wanted men to follow Him not for hope of gain, but for love.

Suppose we probe into the motives of our religion. Why do we serve Christ? Would we serve Him if there were no hope of Heaven or threat of hell? If following Him brought no profit, if turning our backs on Him brought no penalty, should we follow Him still just because we love Him? Should we follow Him if there were no white robe or crown of gold at the end of it all? We are not Christians in the real sense until we can take those words of Francis Xavier—that passionate and devoted soul—on our own lips, and say:

> My God, I love Thee, not because
> I hope for heaven thereby,
> Nor because they who love Thee not
> Are lost eternally.
>
> Not with the hope of gaining aught,
> Not seeking a reward,
> But as Thyself hast lovèd me,
> O ever loving Lord,
>
> E'en so I love Thee and will love,
> And in thy praise will sing,
> Solely because Thou art my God,
> And my Eternal King.

2. The second charge Satan brought against Job's religion was that it *depended on his circumstances*. 'Hast thou considered my servant Job?' asked God of Satan, 'that there is none like him in the earth, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?' Perfect and upright man!' sneers Satan in reply. Job's goodness is mere hothouse piety. His religion is the result of his circumstances. He is good only because he has been sheltered from temptation and trial. 'Hast thou not made an hedge about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?' Satan points to the favourable circumstances in which Job lived, to his happy home, to his freedom from the cares and temptations that come from poverty—in a word, to what scientific men of to-day would call his 'environment,' and says, 'There you have the secret of Job's piety. Hast thou not made an hedge about him? Break down that hedge! Expose him to the buffetings of adverse fortune! Let temptations assail him and he will renounce Thee to Thy face!' That was Satan's second sneer at Job's goodness—it was all the product of his circumstances.

This is very modern, isn't it? For that is what science has been telling us—that what a man is depends largely upon his environment. Now I am not for one moment disposed to deny that environment does greatly influence character. But I will strenuously deny that it determines character. It by no means follows that you are going to get first-class character from first-class homes any more than it follows that you are going to get squalid characters from squalid homes. Men with slummy souls have before to-day issued from palaces; and men with princely souls have issued from slums. But Satan anticipated the modern scientific doctrine, and asserted that Job's goodness was just the result of the

sheltered and protected life he had led. It was all the result of the *hedge*.

Now it is right to build the hedge, and if hedges have been built about us we may well be thankful for their shelter. It is right, it is our duty, as far as possible, to create conditions which shall be favourable to the development of the spiritual life. That is what parents are doing by the training of the home, by their efforts to create holy habits—building the hedge to protect their children against the evil that is in the world! And many of us owe much to the shelter of that hedge. 'Whenever I was tempted to do evil,' said Lord William Russell on the scaffold, 'the memory of my mother came back to me and gave me checks.' And memories of home and early training have done much the same sort of thing for us. They have protected us in the day of storm.

We have reason to be very thankful for the 'hedge,' but a religion that depends upon the hedge is not much of a religion to boast of. We build our hedge only that those around whom we build it may be strong enough to do without it. I have seen young trees and saplings protected by iron fences lest cattle or horses should trample them down and destroy them. But the fences are there simply to give those saplings the chance of growing into a size and a strength when they shall not need the protection of the fence at all. And that is the function of the hedge in the religious life of man. It is to protect him till he is strong enough to do without it. But a religion that depends upon the hedge is a poor thing! Thank God for the hedge that our parents built about us; but when we were thrust forth—away from home to face life and its temptations for ourselves—what happened then? The hedge is taken away for young folk when they leave home for the big town. Alas! in the case of thousands, the religion goes along with the hedge. Army life—those months of service oversea—meant for tens of thousands of our youth the breaking down of the 'hedge.' And again, alas, when the 'hedge' was broken down, religion perished. Our lads travel to the ends of the earth—to that East where 'there ain't no Ten Commandments,' where the restraints of home are taken clean away, and many of them forget their religion and give their homage to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Their religion was a religion of the hedge. But not all depend upon the hedge. With all the hedges broken down, there were soldiers who were loyal soldiers of Jesus Christ as well as brave soldiers of the King. With all the hedges broken down, there are men in far-off places who wear the white flower of the blameless life. With all the hedges broken down, in the midst of foolish companions there are men and women who witness a good confession. Job's piety was not dependent upon the hedge. For when the hedge was broken down and laid low even with the ground, when doubts and despairs assailed his soul, with a grip like death Job clung to God, saying, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.'

But what about our religion? There is so much to help us in a land like this. The conventions of Society, our national traditions, our home training, the moral atmosphere we breathe, are all favourable to religion. But how should we fare if we lived in a land where religion was discarded, mocked at, frowned upon, and where there were no moral conventions to help us? The test of the reality of faith is not, can it live in favourable circumstances, but can it live *anywhere?* The test of the disciples' loyalty came not in the Upper Room but in the judgment hall of the Sanhedrin. Does our faith hold in any circumstances, in any company? It will if we are rooted and grounded in Him. There is the secret of steadfastness. 'In Him.' Faith is not secure so long as it is dependent on the 'hedge.' It is secure only when it has laid hold upon Christ in personal experience. We are not Christians in the truest sense until we can say humbly, yet from the heart, 'I will go with thee to prison and to death, but I will not deny thee on any wise.'[1]

[1] J. D. Jones, in *The Expository Times*, xxxv. 441.

Cynicism.

Job. i. 9.—'Doth Job fear God for nought?'

It is the question of a cynic. What is a cynic? The term is derived from the Greek word for a dog, and means one who snarls and barks at everyone who passes his kennel. The name was first employed to denominate a school of philosophers in Athens who made it one of their chief aims to decry human nature and reduce existence to its barest necessities. Its most famous example was the eccentric Diogenes, who is said to have lived in a tub, and who was once seen going through the streets of Athens in broad daylight with a lighted lantern in his hand. This he would impertinently flash into the face of each passer-by.

'What are you doing, Diogenes?' said one to him good-humouredly.

'I am seeking,' was the answer, 'for an honest man; but I cannot find him.'

The cynic's attitude to humanity has been affected by a number of gifted writers at all times. There is an element of cynicism in the Bible, in such writers as the psalmist, who said in his haste, 'All men are liars,' and still more in some passages of Ecclesiastes. The greatest mind that Irish literature has produced was a cynic to the very core; and behind the simple adventures of Gulliver we see a mordant satire biting deeply into the heart of human nature. Carlyle, though he has many nobler qualities, has a strong vein of cynicism in all his writings, especially in *Sartor Resartus*. His well-known description of man as 'a pitiful hungry biped, wearing breeches' is matched by his estimate of the population of England: 'thirty millions—mostly fools.'

There is an environment which is natural to cynicism, usually to be found in the wealthy and the fashionable circles of the land. When Lord Chesterfield wrote his famous letters, he was probably drawing his inspiration from a court in which 'every man' had 'his price,' and every woman too. When La Rochefoucauld uttered his famous maxim that there is something not altogether displeasing to us in the misfortunes of even our best friends, he was no doubt expressing a truth which he had often had occasion to notice in his intercourse with the gay world of Paris. If, therefore, we want to escape the cynic's fate, we should take care of the atmosphere in which we live and the friends with whom we associate; for be sure of this, there is no one who herds long with the wolves without sooner or later learning to howl.

1. How, then, shall we deliver ourselves from the cynical temper? How shall we cure it if times come in our life when we are strongly tempted to fall into it? In the first place, let us *cultivate the society of good men.* Since certain environments favour the growth of a cynical attitude the obvious lesson is to get out of that atmosphere as much as we can and live in a purer air. Now we cannot always choose our company. We have to live our life where God has placed us, and often its atmosphere is anything but pure. But just as we can get out of the stuffy city every Saturday afternoon and breathe the pure air of the fields, and see the beautiful vistas of the hills, so there are times in all our lives when we can escape from the vitiated atmosphere of sin and breathe a sweeter and a purer air.

2. Let us *live in the company of good books.* What is true of men is to a certain degree true also of books. There is a type of book to-day, very brilliant no doubt, very true, perhaps, in regard to certain forms of life, but it cannot be said to be in any degree helpful or inspiring. It leaves a bad taste in the mouth and makes one feel that human nature is indeed a very sad and depressing thing. Such books may be necessary at times as a protest against a shallow optimism; but as a rule they do harm. They lower our moral tone. They make faith in man more difficult and faith in God next to impossible. There are other books, whose influence is all the other way, and of these the grandest of all is the Bible. The Bible has elements of cynicism in it. Holding as it does the mirror up to life, it would not be a true picture of human nature if it had no

such elements in it. But, on the whole, its teaching is grandly anti-cynical. It brings before us at its beginning man made in the image of God, and at its end God thinking man of so much value that He sent His Son to die for him. 'Honour all men,' says St. Peter. That is the Bible doctrine of man.

3. Last of all, if we want to cure a tendency to cynicism let us *go and help someone else.* It is in stretching out a hand to 'wrestlers with the troubled sea' that we get a heart filled with love to all men. Selfishness becomes naturally cynical; the life of service becomes naturally enthusiastic. To honour all men we have only to try to save them. In saving them we shall get below the crust of selfishness and vileness that repels us, we shall come down to the real heart of love that is in every soul that God has made, if we only get deep enough.

¶ I once met in the hospitals of France a lady who had given her life to nurse our wounded men. She was tireless in her energy, never failing in her smile of good cheer. How did she come to that work? A friend told me her story. She had been cruelly treated by a man, her heart lacerated by a hundred wounds. She crept home like a storm-beaten bird, with feathers frayed and broken wings. For months she lay prostrate, not wishing to live. Then life came slowly back. She rose up. To do—what? To revenge herself on the humanity which had so treated her? Yes, she took her revenge; but it was a noble one. She went out from her comfortable home and became a nurse. When the war broke out she went forth to the battle-zone. She paid back to the brothers of that humanity which had trampled her young life the debt of wrong in sacrifice and service.[1]

Does anyone doubt that such persons have deeper resources of joy and happiness than the most successful people of the world? To deliver the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to bring liberty to the captive, to take up the thousand schemes of progress and enlightenment that are yet unfulfilled, and to help with succour and cheer the many who call for champions and deliverers is to win a more bountiful reward (though that has not been the aim) than can be gained by all one's selfish seeking.

Glory of virtue to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong.
Nay, but she aimed not at glory, no lover of glory she;
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

[1] W. M. Mackay.

The Power of Evil.

Job i. 12.—'And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand.'

THE text suggests that there are limits to the spiritual power of evil, that there is something in every man, a true self, which by God's decree cannot be arbitrarily invaded by any power, a self in which the man sits supreme, and which cannot be conquered unless he surrenders it.

1. This unconquerable part is the *will.* Think of the temptation of Christ in the desert. The Evil Spirit attacks Him, takes Him hither and thither, taunts and mocks Him, but it never reaches His Self. He is always separate and safe. And it is easy to understand what it was in Jesus Christ which the Enemy, with all his powers, could not invade. It was the will. Over everything else he asserted his power. The pain and the temptation which come to us out of this world's disorder came to Christ also. He felt the hunger, and He must have longed to escape it just as we do. Over those beaten paths by which he comes to our destruction, the Power of Evil went to the destruction of our Lord. Only, when he came to the centre, where he finds our wills so weak, he found His will completely strong.

It is the will, then, in which that self resides, that the power of evil cannot touch unless that will voluntarily yields. The will is the man. All else are his circumstances, his delights, the material out of which he makes his pains and pleasures. Around that central will there lie in widening circles the interests and associations of his life; and every differ-

ent kind of evil has its power to invade, to less or greater depths, these outworks of the man's self. Mere physical pain can pierce the outer circle, and hurt the skin and flesh. The loss of wealth or rank pierces a little deeper, and invades the pride. Bereavement plunges its sharp dagger deeper still, and wounds the keen and sensitive affections. The sight of sin touches our moral sense and stirs our grieved indignation. Temptation boldly strikes within them all, and lays its hand on the desires that are close about the will. But none of these can come into the very centre by any power of its own. There sits the will impregnably intrenched. It hears the footsteps of its invaders, near or far away. Some of them march up to its very door, but none can enter and take it captive till it draws the bolt itself and is its own betrayer.

2. The freedom, the power, of self-reserve which this will possesses is absolute. It can shut its door on whom it pleases. The strongest, clearest assurance of this is in the way in which not even its Maker will force Himself upon it, unless it choose to let Him in. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock,' says Christ. 'If any man will hear my voice and open unto me, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.' If any man will open unto me! Not without the man's own willingness will even God come into His children's hearts. And shall we think that He has given to His enemy a power which He has denied to Himself? Nothing can force us to be good: let us be just as sure that nothing can force us to be bad. The soul itself does and must give up. It is the soul's own weakness, not the irresistible power of its enemies, that finally treads it in the dust or leads it away captive into sin. If a man is true to himself, no power in the universe can make him sin.

(1) But, first, he must know that he has a self. He must unwrap all this enveloping mass of occupations and amusements and companionships and reputations which he calls his life, all that vague aggregate which men mean when they talk of him—and inside of it all must find that which is really *he*, that which would last if all these things were stripped off and destroyed, that which God made, which God is educating, and which God will judge.

The true self of every man is in Christ. When Christ came into the world He brought the humanity of every man in the humanity which He assumed. He brought your self and mine; and what we ought to be, and what we might be—nay, more, our power of being it—was in that human life of Jesus Christ. If we want it, we must go there for it.

(2) What is it that Christ shows us all? First, what we were meant to be—the pattern of our human life. Then, that God loves us, and pities us because we have fallen so far away from that. Then, that He will forgive us and restore us if we turn to Him. Our first ideal, God's present love, our future hope—these are the Christian truths. He who sees what God wants him personally to be, how God loves him personally and what a personal salvation is ready for him if he will repent—to him the mist must clear away, the self must disentangle itself from its circumstances, and with its rights, its responsibilities, its hopes, and its needs stand clear before him.

In other words, he who serves Christ out of obedient love comes more and more to feel and say: 'Many things may make me suffer, but nothing can make me sin but my own will. And if I can fill that with His strength, I can be conqueror of everything through Him.'

So, when the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head.
. . . The soul wakes and grows.

¶ There is a link between Divine government and human freewill. It is the guidance of the Holy Spirit, influencing the mind, and prompting the will, to choose what is God's will for us. 'Great is the mystery of godliness'; and much is not for intellect, but for faith. Let us, in all our adversities, remember that God cannot forget His own. A blind child was placed in the arms of a friend, the father exclaiming: 'Now you do not know who holds you.' Then the child spoke a beautiful truth: 'No, father, but I know that you know who holds me.' We cannot grasp the ways of

God, but we can rest satisfied, for He knows the way which we take.[1]

So on I go—not knowing, I would not if I might;
I'd rather walk in the dark with God,
Than go alone in the light;
I'd rather walk by faith with Him,
Than go alone by sight.

[1] Phillips S. Brooks.

RESIGNATION.

Job. i. 21.—'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'

HERE is the perfect utterance of faith in the hour of sorrow. It takes rank with that other, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' Yea, it is worthy to be set beside our Lord's great word in the Garden, 'Thy will be done.' As water streams from the smitten rock, as the bright gold emerges from the cleansing fire and the precious gem from the dark mine, so this pearl of price is drawn from out the gloomy depths of a sea of trouble. It must be counted a rare compensation for all Job's afflictions that he was privileged to put so noble an utterance into the lips of humanity, and teach to all the generations of sufferers the grace of resignation.

I.

WHAT IS RESIGNATION?

We cannot go far through life without hearing in some form the call to resignation.

There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there!
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair![1]

And, besides bereavement, other losses come and griefs befall, almost as bitter as death itself. 'Oh, it is difficult—life is very difficult! It seems right to me sometimes that we should follow our strongest feeling;—but then, such feelings continually come across the ties that all our former life has made for us—the ties that have made others dependent on us—and would cut them in two. . . . There are things we must renounce in life; some of us must resign love.'[1] Some must resign earthly happiness, some must renounce a high ambition, some must lay in the grave a fondly cherished hope. 'Every man is sooner or later familiar with death; every man has to utter his Amen, his So be it, somehow; and there is no better way than this: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.'[2]

Resignation is not simply to grin and bear it, not merely to clench the teeth and grimly hold on. It is not merely, in Matthew Arnold's words, to

'Waive our claim to bliss, and try to bear;
With close-lipped patience for our only friend,
Sad patience, too near neighbour to despair.'

There is more of love in it, and the light of heavenly hope. Perhaps the theme has never been touched with more skill and insight than by Mr. Gladstone in a letter to his wife: 'There is a beautiful little sentence in the works of Charles Lamb concerning one who had been afflicted: "He gave his heart to the Purifier, and his will to the Sovereign Will of the Universe." But there is a speech in the third canto of the *Paradiso* of Dante . . . which is a rare gem. I will only quote this one line:

In la sua volontade è nostra pace
(In His Will is our peace).

The words are few and simple, and yet they appear to me to have an inexpressible majesty of truth about them, to be almost as if they were spoken from the very mouth of God. . . . Resignation is too often conceived to be merely a submission not unattended with complaint

[1] *Longfellow.*

[1] George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss.*
[2] J. Strachan, *Hebrew Ideals*, ii. 128.

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to what we have no power to avoid. But it is less than the whole of a work of a Christian. Your full triumph as far as that particular occasion of duty is concerned will be to find that you not merely repress inward tendencies to murmur—but that you would not if you could alter what in any matter God has plainly willed. . . . Here is the great work of religion.'[1]

So, indeed, it is, as most men find. We are constrained to exclaim, 'It is high, I cannot attain unto it.' Much, of course, will depend on temperament. The irrepressible Mark Tapley was resolutely 'jolly' in the most adverse circumstances and saw nothing creditable in it. Robert Louis Stevenson was another who had no use for resignation. 'John, do you see that bed of Resignation?'—'It's doin' bravely, sir.' 'John, I will not have it in my garden; it flatters not the eye, and comforts not the stomach; root it out.' 'Sir, I ha'e seen o' them that rase as high as nettles, gran' plants!' 'What then? Were they as tall as Alps, if still unsavoury and bleak, what matters it? Out with it then; and in its place put Laughter, and a Good Conceit (that capital home evergreen), and a bush of Flowering Piety—but see it be the flowering sort—the other species is no ornament to any gentleman's Back Garden.'[2] On the other hand, to the sombre-minded there comes a resignation which is the sister of despair. Amiel writes, 'I no longer hope to get well, or to be useful, or to be happy. . . . I wish to die without rebellion and without weakness; that is about all. Is this relic of hope and of desire still too much? Let all be as God will. I resign myself into His hands.'[3]

To the practical, energetic Western the lesson of resignation is especially hard. The dreamy and fatalistic eastern mind seems to find it easier. When the great mosque in Damascus was burned down and all its priceless treasures perished the multitude stood idly by, swaying their bodies to and fro, saying, ''Tis God's will! 'Tis God's will!' It is not so easy for the strong self-will of the West to be curbed and baffled. So, in the bitter hour when we come face to face with the inevitable, we are prone to beat with our feeble hands upon the solid rock and fret against our cruel fate. Resignation, in the sense of a free and loving surrender to the will of God, is an altitude of spirit to which but few attain.

Yet, by the grace of Christ, it may be attained, as Christian biography abundantly shows. Let two exquisite instances suffice. When Richard Cameron was slain at Airsmoss his aged father was a prisoner in the Tolbooth in Edinburgh. As they went to fix his severed head and hands on the Netherbow they took them in to his father and said, 'Do you know them?' The old man took them on his knee, and having bent over them and kissed them he replied, 'I know them. I know them. They are my son's, my dear son's. It is the Lord. Good is the will of the Lord, who cannot wrong me nor mine, but has made goodness and mercy to follow us all our days.'[1] And take this from the life of Cotton Mather, the New England Puritan divine, when his wife came to die: 'When I saw to what a point of resignation I was now called of the Lord, I resolved, with His help, therein to glorify Him. So two hours before my lovely consort expired, I kneeled by her bedside, and I took into my two hands a dear hand, the dearest in the world. With her thus in my hands, I solemnly and sincerely gave her up unto the Lord: and in token of my real *Resignation*, I gently put her out of my hands, and laid away a most lovely hand, resolving that I would never touch it more. . . . She told me that she signed and sealed my act of resignation. And though before that she called for me continually, she after this never asked for me any more.'[2]

Such heights may seem inaccessible, but it may at least help to uplift our drooping spirits if we consider the resignation of Job. It will be found to rest upon the twin pillars of reason and faith.

II.

TWIN PILLARS OF RESIGNATION.

1. *Reason.*—Under an accumulation of stunning blows Job maintained the balance of his

[1] J. Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, i. 215f.
[2] R. L. Stevenson.
[3] *Journal*, 219.

[1] A. Smellie, *Men of the Covenant*, 275.
[2] B. Wendell, *Cotton Mather*, 198.

mind, and brought forward two considerations which were fitted to moderate his grief.

(1) '*The Lord gave*' was his first thought. It was the hand that had formerly enriched his life which had now impoverished it.

'If Thou shouldst call me to resign
What most I prize, it ne'er was mine.'

Surely that sounds artificial. Surely if I have received a gift it *is* mine, and if the giver takes it back it was no true gift. Nay, but here is a deep truth in regard to all the gifts of God, which, alas, is too often forgotten. God's gifts are all conditional, never absolute, never so given as to cancel His ownership. Our Lord in His teaching emphasized the idea of stewardship, bidding us regard the good gifts of God as a trust committed to our charge for which we must render our account. We cannot but know that our dearest earthly possessions—husband, wife or child—are ours only for a season, and must in the course of nature be given back. The Jews tell of a certain Rabbi who, on returning to his home one day, was met by his wife, who said to him that years before she had been entrusted by a friend with two jewels of worth, but now the owner had come back for them. Should she restore them? Certainly, said the Rabbi, the jewels must be restored. Then his wife led him into the chamber where their two children lay dead. These were the jewels which he had agreed should be restored.

However hard it be, yet in the day of bitter loss it is right to remember former gain. The Hand that bereaved is the Hand that blessed. He who took away first gave, and even in the hour of bereavement the richness of the gift should not be forgotten. Robertson of Irvine, the poet preacher, was called to minister comfort to a young widow who had fallen into such a stupor of stony grief that her friends feared for her reason. 'I am sure you feel thankful to God,' he said, 'for those years of perfect happiness you enjoyed together.' 'Oh, why did nobody say that before,' she exclaimed, and at the words her sorrow found vent in a flood of tears.

(2) '*The Lord hath taken away*' was the second thought with which Job solaced himself.

Was that true? Had God done it? If you look at the calamities which befell Job it will be found that two out of the four came not directly by the act of God but by the hands of evil men. The Sabeans raided the oxen and asses, and the Chaldeans carried away the camels. These misfortunes were preventable, either by greater watchfulness on the part of Job's servants or by the protection of a strong government.

How large a part of all the world's miseries and sorrows is due, in the first instance, not to God's will, but to man's wickedness! Think of the illimitable evils that result from lust and oppression, from man's uncleanness in body and soul, from filthy homes and insanitary slums. Only in recent years has science opened our eyes to these things, and day by day the realm of the preventable and the curable is being steadily enlarged. To our fathers it was all part of the mysterious providence of God—a simple, but to us no longer a tenable, theory. 'It is difficult for us to think back to the time when most diseases were quite inexplicable visitations, when there was no germ theory. As Sir Ray Lancaster says, when gaol-fever or typhus spread to judge and jury, people spoke of the Angel of Death, whereas we speak of a microbe carried by the clothes-louse.' [1]

It must be admitted that religious thought has not yet adjusted itself to this new view of things. To attribute every misfortune to the will of God is so easy, and seems so pious a solution, that we fall into the way of using the words thoughtlessly. And so we slander God and provoke rebellion, secret or open, in many minds. To one who spoke thus of the will of God a grief-stricken mother replied with indignation, 'It was not God's will that my boy should be shattered by a shell in France.' She was right. One might as well have pointed to the battle-fields, seamed and scarred with trench and shell-hole, and said, 'Look at the work of Nature.' Such things were not the work of Nature, but a disfigurement and outrage upon Nature. The trees and

[1] J. Arthur Thomson, *What is Man?* 195.

the flowers, the green fields and the waving corn, these are the work of Nature.

Even so the will of God is life and health. If a woman keeps a filthy house where germs of disease can breed in every corner, or if a family is compelled to live under insanitary conditions, and some of the children take ill and die, it will not do simply to say it is God's will and there's an end to it. Resignation of that sort is a thoroughly bad thing. 'The truer Christianity teaches us that disease and ignorance are not ultimate decrees of Heaven, and that such discontent as the first visions of light bring to the yearning soul is a divine discontent. The finest resignation and submission are not incompatible with heroic contest against the forces of darkness. The old idea was to endure. This was succeeded by a better idea—to alleviate and cure.'[1] This is a work which is wholly in line with the will of God. As Nature clothes her shattered fields in green, as the life forces of the body fly to the closing of a wound, so the power and love of God are ever working to alleviate and cure all human ill. To resign ourselves to evils that are curable is to resist the will of God.

Yet, in another sense, Job was right when he said, 'The Lord hath taken away.' The curtain is drawn aside and we catch a glimpse of a drama which is being enacted in a higher world. Behind the Sabeans is Satan, but above Satan is God, who suffers certain evils to befall in order that some higher purpose may be served. So we reach a point of view from which it is seen that evil as well as good is embraced within the scope of God's mighty plan. There must be a sense in which this is true, unless we are to think that God has lost control of the world. Here, however, reason begins to go beyond its depth, and we must carefully guard against the error of ascribing good and evil alike to the self-same will of God. 'Even the Devil,' it has been said, 'must be conceived of as perfect in his part and function in the Cosmos. . . . In the Divine Nature the greatest sinner as well as the greatest saint lives and moves and has his being.'[2]

[1] Helen Keller, *Out of the Dark*, 186.
[2] William Kirkland, *Rational Mysticism*, 220.

Conscience revolts against such reasoning, knowing that it must lead to moral indifference.

Yet is there a deep source of peace in the assurance that God effectively and at every moment controls the world and human life, that He makes even the wrath of man to praise Him, and that all things, even the most untoward, find their place in His great plan of good.

2. *Faith.*—This brings us to faith, which was the second pillar upon which Job's resignation rested. 'Blessed be the name of the Lord,' he said. Here was a bold utterance of faith triumphant over sense. In the ultimate issue resignation is faith resting upon God.

This quality of soul will vary in colour according to men's various views of God. If God be conceived in terms of power then submission to His will may not rise higher than what William James calls 'the sophistical "resignation" which devotees of cowering religions preach . . . resignation in the sense of licking a despotic Deity's hand.'[1] It is to be feared that even in Christian minds there remain traces of this spirit of bondage. Some seem hardly to rise above the grovelling theology of Caliban.

> The best way to escape His ire
> Is, not to seem too happy.
> . . . . . .
> Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos![2]

But when God is conceived in terms of wise and holy love then resignation ceases to be slavish and may become even joyous. A simple and childlike faith says, 'My Father's hand will never cause His child a needless tear.' This is the Christian view of God, according to which the will and the love of the Heavenly Father are one.

> A gloomy cross stood on the path I trod,
> I needs must lift it, would I onward go;—
> On it was written clear, '*The Will of God.*'
> Gazing, I wept and trembled, bending low.
>
> For much I dreaded what might be behind;
> Till Faith came forward, with her words of cheer,

[1] *The Will to Believe*, 50.
[2] Browning.

'Why weepest thou, O thou of doubtful mind?
Arise and take thy cross! What dost thou fear?'

She raised me up and pointed, when, behold!
The cross that terrified had passed away,
And there, with '*Love*' inscribed in burnished gold,
Another stood, which shone resplendently.

Awhile I carried it, with wondering awe;
Its glory shone, a light upon my road;
Till, looking at the other side, I saw
The words which I had feared,—'*The Will of God.*'

I looked at Faith; she smiled,—'I did but move
The cross around and show the other name;
Behind the Will there always lies the Love;
The Will and Love with God are but the same.[1]

III.

THE ATTAINMENT OF RESIGNATION.

THERE would appear to be no limit to the power of faith to sustain the human spirit. It gives joy amid sorrow, a strange tranquillity in bereavement, and often in the case of the martyrs a triumphant insensibility to torture. Recounting her experiences when stripped naked and flogged for her faith, a humble Huguenot woman said, 'Why can I not write down the inconceivable influences, consolations, and peace which I felt interiorly? To understand them one must have passed by the same trial; they were so great that I was ravished, for there where afflictions abound grace is given superabundantly. In vain the women cried, "We must double our blows; she does not feel them, for she neither speaks nor cries." And how should I have cried, since I was swooning with happiness within?'[2]

How shall we attain to grace sufficient for our lesser needs, if indeed they are lesser? It can never be an easy path. For most of us, perhaps, this is the hardest part of the good fight of faith. Only by firm and steady discipline can the end be achieved. 'And this is to be obtained through a double process: the first, that of checking, repressing, quelling the inclination of the will to act with reference to self as a centre; this is to mortify it. The second, to cherish, exercise, and expand its new and heavenly power of acting according to the will of God, first, perhaps, by painful effort in great feebleness and with many inconsistencies, but with continually augmenting regularity and force, until obedience become a necessity of second nature.'[1]

The power for this moral discipline comes through the Holy Spirit, when we dwell much in the love of God, and fix our eyes steadfastly on the face of the Father as He is revealed in Christ. Then shall we be sustained in the joyous conviction that all things work together for our good, for 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'

J. H. MORRISON.

[1] Clara A. Tuckett.

[2] W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 288.

Self-Preservation.

Job ii. 4.—'Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.'

1. THERE is a partial truth in these words, as is the case with most of Satan's lies. They are the more cruel on that account. As Tennyson has it—

A lie that is all a lie may be met with and fought outright;
But a lie that is half a lie is a harder matter to fight.

For the love of life is not only an instinctive principle, but also, within certain limits to be presently defined, a positive duty. The precept, 'Thou shalt not kill,' refers to myself as well as to my neighbour, and requires me to use all lawful means for the preservation of my own life, as well as the lives of others. Hence, a contempt for the laws of health, a

[1] J. Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, i. 216.

needless exposure of ourselves to danger, and a neglect to use means for the prolongation of life are sins, not only against our physical constitution, but also against the moral law. So much apparent foundation, then, there is for Satan's assertion. We instinctively cling to life, and it is our duty to use all proper means for its preservation.

The impulse to live helps to foster endurance in men and women, bracing them against the sorrows and misfortunes of earthly existence. But for this inward impulsion we should probably give up the battle in the first fit of pain, the first onslaught of hostile circumstance. Think of those men smitten by shot and shell, but not fatally, in the recent War! Thousands of them were maimed, crippled, disfigured, yet, amid all their sufferings and disabilities, they wished not to die. Life is sweet, or, at any rate, living is sweet, a fruit that must be poisoned until it grows bitter indeed before we fling it voluntarily from our hands.

¶ In George Borrow's words: 'There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise the wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?' The beggar by the wayside and the king in his palace cling to life. The murderer under sentence of death hopes for a reprieve. The love of life is strong in youth. Nor does it grow weak with the increase of years.

The tree of deepest root is found
Least willing still to quit the ground;
'Twas therefore said, by ancient sages,
That love of life increased with years
So much, that in our latter stages,
When pains grow sharp and sickness rages,
The greatest love of life appears.

Old and young, rich and poor, good and bad—all have the love of life.[1]

2. But that is a truth on the lower range. Turn to the mountain air. Here is a man, called Paul, parting in sorrow from his friends at Ephesus to go to Jerusalem, and with a presentiment that he will never return. What awaits him at Jerusalem? He cannot tell. He knows it is bonds and afflictions; it may be worse, it may even be death. And what does he say? 'I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself.' He has made the Great Discovery. What is that? It is that there is something nobler than life, something which, if you place them in comparison, shrivels life into insignificance, converts it into an unvalued commodity. He has a course to run, a mission to fulfil, for the Lord Jesus Christ, and against that mission life counts as the small dust in the balance. He is like a traveller compelled to pass through a forest at midnight. The path is dark and perilous; but such a light burns at the other side, and the glow of it repeats itself so exultantly in his soul, that the forest ceases to exist, the frowning trees disappear, and the roar of wild beasts is hushed.

And Paul was not the first to discover the secondary character of the life of the body, the necessity that impels it to bow to the life of the soul. The knowledge came to men gradually as they rose in the scale of being, as they climbed out of the animal into the human through the long stretches of historic and prehistoric times. It is the vision that has lifted the race to loftier and yet loftier elevations, and has waxed clearer with the passage of the centuries. It found its most illustrious exemplification in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He, too, set His face to go to Jerusalem when all that Jerusalem held in its hands for Him was a crown of thorns and a cruel cross. He, too, was under the great impulsion, the longing to escape the bitter cup; but amid the shadows of Gethsemane He saw something greater than life, the high mandate of the Father's purpose, and the sight thrilled His lips with such an exulting obedience that there broke from them the triumphant words, 'Not my will, but thine be done.'

3. 'All that a man hath will he give for his life.' Is that so? No; there are things too precious to be given even for life. Love and

[1] W. McCallum.

honour are greater. The love of life is elemental in the human heart, and yet there is something deeper even than that. A mother will without a moment's hesitation give up her life for her child. A man will die for his monarch and his country. Notice that it is a personal love which lies at the back of this; supreme self-sacrifice needs the stimulus of the emotion of love. St. Paul, writing to the Romans, says, 'Scarcely for a righteous man will one die'; mere righteousness is too cold to evoke utmost sacrifice. 'Peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die'; a good man has a living touch which brings forth from us a warmer response. And then Paul goes on to the eternal wondrous fact in God's heart which is the foundation of all human self-sacrifice since—not when we were good, but while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Love that on principle lays down life is greatest of all. It is brave, yet it is comparatively easy in the heat of battle, when the blood is up, to lead the forlorn hope, to rush into the fray and to win the Victoria Cross. Far harder is it to risk life in cold blood in the clear, calm light of principle. It is fine to do noble deeds of sacrifice for some person; it is harder to do them for sheer sake of honour. And it is when man finds that honour and principle simply carry him back to the Great Person who is behind all, when love of right and love of God are the same thing, that the great warming, melting, fusing power of the highest Love conquers all, and man lays down his life as of far less value than honour and love.

¶ When the newspaper interviewer asked Captain Oates, before the Antarctic expedition sailed, what a man's duty would be if he were weak and ill, and the added burden of his dead weight would risk his companions' lives, he instantly replied, 'His duty would be to go away and die.' That was a brave man's utterance; but it was much easier to say that in London than to act it in the Antarctic. For picture that scene which makes our hearts throb and our eyes burn. There lies before us the eternal white solitude of that great ice-plateau, ten thousand feet above the sea. Day by day the weary figures fight their way back from the Pole, growing weaker and weaker against the continuous blast. The giant strength of Petty Officer Evans first gives way. He wanders; they go back and find him; with their failing strength they have to drag him on the sledge until they bury him. Again they toil on, each step slower than the last, Captain Oates visibly failing. Then comes the last scene: the tent within which alone is there the slightest shelter as the terrific blizzard howls and screams past, turning the vast silence into the uproar of death; in that tent the four brave men, helpless, waiting.

Then in that last solemn hour there came the final test of life, of principle, of love. 'I will go out awhile, and may be rather long,' said the man whose frostbite was incapacitating him. And he knew, and they knew, what it meant. There in the utter loneliness he went out to die that his comrades might not be impeded—to die all alone. But of this I am sure, that over him there bent in the howling of the icy storm One who did not leave him alone, repeating to him the words of another night so far away when He went out into the Syrian night alone, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.'[1]

Job's Wife.

Job. ii. 9.—'Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? renounce God, and die' (RV).

Job was a wealthy, a happy, and a good man, but by a series of misfortunes, partly political and partly natural, he was suddenly robbed of all his substance and left poor. On the top of these calamities there befell a greater—the death of all his children at one dread stroke—and we are left with this pitiful contrast: one hour, a man possessing everything he could wish; the next, stripped bare, penniless and childless.

The scene that followed is dramatic enough, surprising to some extent, yet ever moving. It has never been better described than in the words of the original writer, 'Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and

[1] W. T. A. Barber, *The Morning of Life*, 210.

fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' That was the first word in the hour of his direst calamity—always an illuminating word, revealing the very soul of a man. Could anything be greater? 'He fell down and worshipped.'

One writer quotes a beautiful modern parallel from *The Personal Memoirs of Dr. John Brown's Father:* 'We were all three awakened by a cry of pain—sharp, insufferable, as if one were stung. . . . We found my father standing before us, erect, his hands clenched in his black hair, his eyes full of misery and amazement, his face white as that of the dead. He frightened us. He saw this, or else his intense will had mastered his agony, for, taking his hands from his head, he said, slowly and gently, "Let us give thanks," and turned to a little sofa in the room; there lay our mother, dead.' 'He fell down and worshipped.' Yes, but in Job the mother was alive; it was her children who were dead, and yet her grief is passed over unmentioned. It shows plainly enough—if it needed showing—that the book was written by a man, who made all the interest centre in Job and his problem.

After this series of calamities one other befell. Job was shattered in health; and, broken in fortune and in body, he went out beyond the borders of the village to sit among the heaps of ashes and mourn. It is then that his wife appears. 'Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? renounce God, and die.' But he said unto her, 'Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' And thus rebuked and silenced, the woman passes from the scene. Inadequately dealt with, we all feel. Her part in the sorrow unexpressed and unrecognized; her problem brushed aside. Yet surely she had her problem, too.

1. Job's problem was intellectual, hers emotional; his was of the head, hers of the heart. As one woman said when her son flung at her a retort which he thought rather smart, though a little involved, 'I don't know what your words mean, but I know you are hurting me.' Job's wife had her problem, as well as Job; different in a measure because she was a woman, yet surely equally real.

Now an edition of the Book of Job has been issued with illustrations, and the illustrations are by a woman; and one is a picture of Job's wife. The picture represents her utterly overwhelmed with grief. 'She has thrown herself across Job's knees, as he sits on the ground—his brow shaded with sackcloth, his mouth half hidden with his hand, his eyes bewildered and heavy, as with sleeplessness. She lies across his knees, her left arm clasping her head, which is hidden. . . . The right arm hangs long and helpless, till the forefinger unconsciously touches the ashes.' 'Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? renounce God, and die.' Not the cynical jeer, surely, of one who had never known belief, but the last gasp of a passionate heart broken in its desolation. 'Can you still keep your faith? Mine has gone—I care for nothing more; renounce God and die.' A terrible light is flashed upon this ancient grief by what a woman said recently: 'I prayed every day for six months that my son might be spared, and now he is gone: I have no more use for God.'

'Can you still keep your faith? Mine is gone,' said Job's wife to her husband. 'Renounce God and die. I have no more use for God.' The sorrow of Job's wife has never been dealt with—perhaps never will be: certainly never by a man. And a woman would probably—wisely—let it alone, or at least not deal with it by words: by a picture perhaps, or by clasping the stricken mother in her arms and weeping out her grief with her.

2. How Job tried to keep his faith the rest of the book tells. And what a heroic struggle it was! He battered the gates of heaven for a reason; stormed up to the very throne of God, demanding the meaning of the world's pain and woe; but even when in the end he failed to find a full explanation, he still kept his faith—'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' because the only alternative

was everlasting darkness and endless death. He recognized that there are some problems which must wait, but that the life which loses faith loses itself. There are some things about which we must be content to know that there is a solution, without knowing what the solution is. Job found a man's way out at last. Did his wife ever find a way out, or had she no use for God ever afterwards?

We may find something of an answer in a poem like Kipling's *Mother o' Mine:*

If I were hanged on the highest hill,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose love would follow me still,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

If I were drowned in the deepest sea,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose tears would come down to me,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

If I were damned of body and soul,
I know whose prayers would make me whole,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

A woman who could never lose faith in her son could scarcely let God go, for that were endless loss for both.

A beautiful story from the life of Buddha hints at another answer. A little Indian mother brought her child to Buddha, not realizing that it was dead, or refusing to recognize the hard and final fact. 'Can you heal it?' was her plea. 'Yes,' he said, 'but first go, beg a mustard-seed from some house—but let it be a house in which none ever died, no father, no mother, no child or slave.' Far and wide her eager search went, ever in vain, and she came again empty-handed, but open-eyed—at last in some small measure understanding; lonelier in life, but not utterly broken:

I went, Lord, clasping to my breast
The babe, grown colder, asking at each hut
Here in the jungle and towards the town—
'I pray you, give me mustard, of your grace,
A tola-black'; and each who had it gave,
For all the poor are piteous to the poor:
But when I asked, 'In my friend's household here
Hath any peradventure ever died—
Husband or wife, or child, or slave?' they said:
'O sister! what is this you ask? the dead
Are very many, and the living few!'
So with sad thanks I gave the mustard back,
And prayed of others; but the others said,
'Here is the seed, but we have lost our slave!'
'Here is the seed, but our good man is dead!'
'Here is some seed, but he that sowed it died
Between the rain-time and the harvesting!'
Ah, sir! I could not find a single house
Where there was mustard-seed and none had died!
Therefore I left my child—who would not suck
Nor smile—beneath the wild-vines by the stream,
To seek thy face and kiss thy feet, and pray
Where I might find this seed and find no death,
If now, indeed, my baby be not dead,
As I do fear, and as they said to me.

'My sister! thou hast found,' the master said,
'Searching for what none finds—that bitter balm
I had to give thee. He thou lovedst slept
Dead on thy bosom yesterday: to-day
Thou knowest the whole wide world weeps with thy woe.
The grief which all hearts share grows less for one.'

Man finds one road; woman often another; but one way or other the salt of life is to keep faith even in the midst of darkest sorrow. 'Renounce God, and die'—words upon the lips of some woman centuries before Christ; 'I have no more use for God'—words of some poor broken-hearted mother in the midst of the awful calamity of the twentieth century: identical in their meaning and their agony, but both spelling—if unrelieved—death to the soul, death to man, death to the world.

It is easy enough to keep faith when all is bright as a summer's day, but the life of the world depends upon your keeping your faith when all is dark as a winter's night. If, when

all is gone, when death and desolation have done their utmost, and the soul reels stunned from the mightiest blow that fate can deal, you can still say, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' then faith is saved, and the world is saved, and day will dawn.[1]

Good and Evil.

Job ii. 10.—'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?'

WHAT do these words mean? Is Job consoling himself with the thought that God is the Author of evil; that he is in the hands of an Almighty Power that has both the will and the right to do wrong?

The word that holds the key to the problem is *evil*. What does it here signify? Evil may be of three kinds—moral, intellectual, or physical.

1. Does Job mean that we receive or suffer *moral evil* at the hand of God? Moral evil is sin, and sin is the antagonism of the human nature or will to the Divine, the attempt of a free yet mortal being to erect his own inclinations into a law for himself and the universe. Moral evil is just the absolute enemy and contradiction of God; the denial in nature and act of His right to be God, the moral Lawgiver and Sovereign of man. The bad nature is a nature abhorrent to the Divine, the bad act is an act done against the Divine will, and designed to defeat the Divine purpose. And so God has no more fellowship with moral evil than light has with darkness. He is good, it is bad; He is holy, it is guilty; He is righteous, it is wrong; He is love, it is hate; He is happiness, it is misery. In this sense evil is impossible to God, and man can never suffer or receive it at His hand.

2. Does he mean *intellectual evil?* So far as imperfection of knowledge which is due to limitation of intellect is evil, it is an evil we receive at the hand of God. And we necessarily receive it if we are to be at all. The Omniscient is the infinite intellect, and even the Almighty could not create another infinite, let alone an infinity of infinites. That belongs to the region of impossibilities, and is not even conceivably possible. But simple limitation of nature is no evil, properly so called. A being perfect in its own order and degree is good, and knowledge perfect within its own range is, though infinitely remote from omniscience, not evil. But where the will works through the intellect, creating ignorance or error, evil becomes real. If man does not seek to know the best and think the truest, he sins; and the error in thought is translated into the wrong action. But God is not the Author of ignorance, but of knowledge; He is the Illuminator, Maker of man's light, not of his darkness. All truth is of God, all error of man. 'The inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding.' The light of heaven never leads astray, and our mental evils, whether due to confusion or to error, we inflict on ourselves or suffer from man, never from God.

3. Does Job mean *physical evil?* In moral and intellectual evil man is active, in physical he is passive; in the former he acts or does, in the latter he suffers or endures. He may, indeed, inflict physical evil on himself or others, but this infliction is a moral act, bearing all the qualities and responsibilities of moral action. What is here regarded as physical evil is suffering, pain, or shock of nature working sorrow and distress. This evil may be of various kinds and may proceed from various causes.

(1) *Hereditary.*—The child has often to suffer from the sin of his father, or even the sins of remote ancestors. Sins do not die with the sinner's death; they live after him, subtly working evils he little imagined in the mad hour of indulgence. While infancy and childhood remain it will be true that more of the innocent suffer than the guilty. The evil-doer who sins against the nature God gave him sins also against the nature he himself helps to give, works wasting feebleness and disease in generations that are to be. No man can calculate the inherited misery of this world. Could but a fraction of it rise in terrible vision before

[1] W. J. Farrow, in *The Expository Times*, xxix. 368ff.

the imagination of the most selfish debauchee, it would startle him from his sin and drive him to seek the lost purity, the stainless moral integrity, which is, even from the standpoint of Nature, the noblest physical legacy man can leave to man.

(2) *Punitive.*—The suffering that follows close on the heels of sin is one of the rods by which God chastises the sinner. If a man indulges in strong drink, his indulgence causes in him greater mischief and misery than medicine can cure. If he is imprudent and subjects his strength to a strain greater than it can bear, then he suffers from a vigour bent and broken into weakness. And what happens to the individual may happen to the nation or society. Pestilences are often punitive evils, judgments of God against men who have broken His great social and sanitary laws. Science loves to declare physical law inviolable, and its inviolability but means that where man transgresses he must be punished. Disobedience to the constitution God gave and the order He maintains ought to involve, as it does involve, suffering and loss.

(3) *Corrective.*—Men often suffer as much from ignorance or inexperience as from sin. The child who puts its hand into the fire does not expect the fire to burn, but it burns nevertheless. The man who, giddy of brain, ventures too near the dizzy precipice, reels and falls, and finds that the gravitation which binds atoms together can bring disaster to the incautious man. And corrective suffering is beneficent; it teaches man to obey the law by correcting his neglect of it; it compels conformity to the order within which he lives. A universe without law were a universe without order, and where no order is no reason has been or can be. The individual who disobeys must suffer, and learn by his suffering that law may be established and order reign to the universal good.

(4) *Testing.*—What is so named is the suffering meant to be *testing and disciplinary*. It is not designed to tempt, or seduce to evil, but to test, to reveal the real character and quality of the man, and to train or fit to nobler purposes and for higher ends. This tentative and disciplinary suffering is a necessary stage in the path to perfection, a condition essential to the most perfect obedience. The necessity is rooted in the very nature of things. Moral character can be formed only through conflict, and the higher the character the fiercer must the conflict be. The forces of moral evil active in our world cannot spare a good man—must ever, as evil, strive to overcome his good. God can develop the highest type and quality of excellence only by the discipline of pain, the method and way of sorrow. An untried Abraham would have been no friend of God; only through trial could his faithfulness be manifested or even attained. Paul carried a thorn in his flesh; and had it not been there, so borne as to be overcome, no heavenly vision would have been either possible or realized. The same necessity made the sinless also the tempted Jesus; and the most holy Person of our race and history was 'made perfect through sufferings'; the necessity being so real and great that 'though he were a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things that he suffered.' Where sorrow like His is not endured, perfection like His cannot be attained.

Now which of those kinds of evil applies to the case before us? The evil which Job had received from the hand of God was not hereditary, because it had nothing to do with his descent, or the sins of former men; nor was it punitive, meant to chastise him for his past sins, for he was 'a perfect man and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil'; nor was it corrective, for he had not even in an unconscious way broken the laws either of the physical or of the social world. And so we must look to the last kind of evil for his meaning—testing evil.

And this tentative evil, this suffering that makes perfect, is what Job feels he is receiving at the hand of God. The bad moral forces of the world, personified in Satan, seek to conquer him. God allows them to do so, must allow them because the world is moral, and Job a free man who can be obedient only through choice, achieve perfection only by liberty. And he feels that what works by God's permission is, in a sense, His minister

working against Him, but yet by the wisdom that restrains and directs even the evil is forced to work for Him. And so Job suffers the evil, sure that within and through it there is working the God of good. He knows in whom he has believed, and his faith rises victorious over loss. A world which has the righteous God for its Ruler can never know ultimate evil. The evil that comes to the righteous man must be allowed to come to him as a thing that, however hard to bear for the moment, has the promise of diviner gifts and graces. Suffering is harsh only when inflicted for its own sake; is gracious when inflicted that it may exalt and beautify him who suffers. And so it is in the faith that God does not rejoice in man's sorrow, that loss to man is pain to God, but that when it comes, as come it must, to the man who fears God, it brings a blessing in its cold hand, and eternal though unrealized joy in its heavy heart, that Job asks his dark yet strangely bright question, 'What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' [1]

¶ All the great lives of the world have been the tried lives. The names that thrill us, the histories that inspire our virtue, the episodes of heroism that gladden us and exalt us, are all linked in some way with suffering. There is, in fact, nothing in mere happiness that is exalting or inspiring. There is no more uninteresting person in the world than the person who has uniformly succeeded in life. The general contempt that is felt for the millionaire, or the man who makes money fast and easily and does nothing else, is not the fruit of envy, as is commonly supposed; but it is the working of a noble instinct, which makes us feel that there is nothing really enviable in such lives. We would rather have written the poetry of Keats, or painted a picture of Turner's, or composed a sonata of Beethoven's, even though it had meant that we were poor as they were, and uncared for by the world. We would rather have died with Gordon in the Soudan, than have made a fortune out of nitrates; have done the work that Livingstone or Moffat did, than have 'fed on the lilies and lain on the roses' of life with the luckiest millionaire who never knew a want unsatisfied or a calamity that could not be averted. Some acquaintance with sorrow is absolutely necessary to modify the corrupting effect of too uniform a happiness. The great lives have usually been lives that were greatly tried, and herein is their fascination; the greatest men have always been those who knew the use of sorrow, and have learned to say: What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? [1]

¶ In one of his *Late Lyrics,* Thomas Hardy rejects Job's counsel. Why? Because he does not know Job's God. This is the lyric—

You say, O Sage, when weather-checked,
'I have been favoured so
With cloudless skies, I must expect
This dash of rain or snow.'

'Since health has been my lot,' you say,
'So many months of late,
I must not chafe that one short day
Of sickness mars my state.'

You say, 'Such bliss has been my share
From Love's unbroken smile,
It is but reason I should bear
A cross therein awhile.'

And thus you do not count upon
Continuance of joy;
But, when at ease, except anon
A burden of annoy.

But, Sage—this Earth—why not a place
Where no reprisals reign,
Where never a spell of pleasantness
Makes reasonable a pain? [2]

Silent Comfort.

Job ii. 13.—'None spake a word unto him; for they saw that his grief was very great.'

1. THOSE men have been held up to the eternal ridicule of all the world as 'Job's comforters'; but they have given us an insight into the way to comfort those who are suffering. There is nothing more lovely or more difficult

[1] A. M. Fairbairn.

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Endless Choice*, 59.
[2] Thomas Hardy, *Late Lyrics and Earlier*, 104.

than to be a comforter. It is done best by the tender-hearted and the strong. These men were admirable comforters. Could friendship do a better thing than they did?

A weeping eye ofttimes desires another, and they who would pour out the oil of joy should be able to indulge in sadness. When the soul is very sad, silence is very good. People sometimes go to comfort a friend, and they dole out their texts like a bashful curate. But these men sat in silence with Job seven days and seven nights, weeping with him. What more could they have done? His soul was sick even to death, and they sat down and watched him in silence. If we would be a comforter to a man in great sorrow, we need not begin to talk much to him—the less the better.

¶ I went once to an old and dear friend, who had lost his wife: they were a singularly devoted pair, and all of us who knew him wondered how he would face this devastating blow. I pondered, as I sat in the train journeying towards him, what I was to say to him when we met. I tried to find the words which would comfort him, or at least tell him my sympathy, but I do not need to say that when we met, for some time there was no word spoken at all. Our hands gripped. Words would have been a profanation.[1]

¶ Silence is older than speech. Speech came in yesterday, speech is always amending itself, speech is always publishing new editions of its own venntose and empty eloquence. Silence abides, uninterpreted, uninterpretable, grand, majestic, divine. Silence is older than song. Song is a foolish little thing that began to find its poor little toys only yesterday, and jangle them in the nursery of this poor initial world. Song has its place, but it must come a long time after silence; it is very tender and very exhilarating and inspiring and comforting, but silence is the true song, silence is the real music; song is eternity broken up into moments and audible notes. When God had finished His handiwork the morning stars sang together: song was long in coming; song could come only under definable and acceptable circumstances; song never begins until it is really happy or really hopeful. It was in silence that God built the temple of the sun and the sanctuary of the morning and the night. Silence is older than prayer. Prayer is almost as old as man, but man is only an infant, God's baby. Well, as old as humanity; but how old is humanity? A million, fifty million ages, and fifty million ages squared and cubed? Mayhap; all that is nothing to eternity. A wondrous ministry is silence. Only a man here and there has been qualified for the exercise of that holy priesthood. Said the young hearts that thought they had news for the prophet: Knowest thou that thy master will be taken from thee to-day? And he said, Yes, hold ye your peace. They wanted to give him information, to talk over the matter, to reduce it to gossip and conversation; but he said, Yea, I know, be still, out of the way! And there are people who would ask a grief-stricken man how he is! As if it mattered how *he* is! He is outside the circle of explanation and the miserable definition of expression. How are you!—my God! what does it matter how *he* is? let him alone! hold ye your peace! It was well meant, no doubt; the young men intended to sympathize with Elisha; yes, but at a moment when there was no room for such sympathy: don't talk! be dumb! let there be, if you please, a masonic grip, a masonic look, a touch divine, but hold words in contempt, and set your feet upon them as upon scorned things.[1]

¶ One of the men whom Dean Burgon sketches in his *Lives of Twelve Good Men* is Charles Marriott. He says: His sympathy was excessive; his heart, most tender and affectionate. There was something almost womanly in his kindness. At a season of bitter affliction (it was the latter part of the year 1854) I remember receiving one particular visit from him. It was a raw comfortless night—the wind howling up the college staircase. Who could it be? What could any one want with me on such a night—at such an hour? . . . It was Marriott. He entered; divested himself of his cloak—wrapper—veil. I still could not imagine what had brought him—for he said nothing: but sat down near me, and sadly surveyed the fire. I soon *felt* what his errand

[1] C. Hepher, *The Fellowship of Silence*, 229.

[1] Joseph Parker.

must be. He knew my heart was heavy—was aching. He had come—to keep me company: and he sat silent, like Job's friends; and for the same excellent reason.[1]

The Grave.

Job iii. 17.—'There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest.'

I HAVE many times, says Dr. Boyd of St. Andrews, thought of preaching from these memorable words: but I remembered what was said by a great divine as the reason why he had never preached from another very familiar verse of Holy Scripture. He said that really he could only repeat his text, if he were to seek to discourse upon it: that he could add nothing to its force and beauty.

The beauty of the words is unmistakable; but their force, their full force in the light of Christ, is not so easily felt. They are spoken of the grave, which Job elsewhere calls 'the house appointed for all living.'

1. After his first outbreak of wretched feeling, the patriarch calms down a little: and then he comes to that beautiful description of the rest into which he would have gone if he had been spared the toil and the trouble here. He tells us how he would have slumbered with the great, the wise, the good: how he would have lain still and been quiet, where trouble could never come, in the peaceful grave.

¶ It is not necessary that we should seek to justify the impatient burst, in which Job wished, as many others have wished since, that he had never been born. Jonathan Swift, a Christian divine and a great deal more, in the review of a wasted and disappointed life, took up the ancient story of the patient patriarch in his impatient day. When he parted from a friend it was with the expressed hope that they might never meet again. When a large pier-glass fell one day on the spot where the Dean had been speaking to a friend a few minutes before, he met the congratulations on his escape only by a regret—'I wish the glass had fallen upon me.' For years he had marked the anniversary of his birth by reading the third chapter of the book of Job, praying that the day whereon he was born might be darkness; that he might have lain still and been quiet: 'then had I been at rest.'[1]

2. There, Job says, for one pleasant thing, 'the wicked cease from troubling.' Yes: there is one place into which the suffering can escape, one place where their persecutors have no power. Cross the line that parts life from death, and the strongest human hand cannot reach to vex or harm any more.

There is nothing more striking about the state of those who have gone into the unseen world than the completeness of their escape from all worldly enemies, however malignant, and however powerful. And it is so with all the troubles of this mortal life, small and great. All the cares of life, all its anxieties, all its pains and bereavements, are cast off utterly when we pass the line into the state of the departed. 'There the wicked cease from troubling': cease, absolutely and completely, and for ever.

¶ There have been striking examples that bring this home to us strongly. We have all heard the story of that Highland soldier who fell, in war, into the hands of a savage Indian tribe. The Indians were preparing, according to their barbarous custom, to put their prisoner to death by horrible lingering tortures. You remember how he evaded these. He told his captors that he possessed a magic charm which rendered him invulnerable; and for proof of this he bade one of the strongest warriors among the Indians take a sword and try to cut off his head; saying that the savage, striking with all his force, could not inflict so much as a scratch upon him. Scarcely were the words said, when the savage, fetching a tremendous blow, made the soldier's head fly for many yards from his body. And then the barbarians felt that they were foiled and befooled; the brave Highlander was gone where they could not reach to torture! Think, too, of the bloodthirsty Roman Emperor who, hearing that an enemy whom he designed for torture was dead, exclaimed in bitterness, 'Ah, has that man escaped me!'

[1] i. 357.

[1] H. Craik, *The Life of Jonathan Swift*, ii. 243.

And indeed he *had* escaped him, thoroughly and completely.[1]

3. But there is something beyond the mere escape from worldly evil. Now the busy heart is quiet at last, and the weary head lies still. 'There,' says Job, 'the weary are at rest.' 'The weary': and oh, what multitudes there are of them! Not merely those who often feel the daily weariness growing on the over-driven body and mind. All are weary, more or less, and grow more so as they go on. Many a human being has said sincerely in the time of weariness and trouble, 'I wish I were in my grave!' Often hastily said, foolishly said, and not quite sincerely said, the words yet testify to a longing to creep to that dreamless rest of forgetfulness, and (like Job) to 'lie still!' And though humbly submissive to God's good-will, and though feeling that 'to live is Christ,' and though aware that to abide here is needful for others' sake, yet the best of the race have sometimes known what it is to look forward with a sigh to that perfect calm. There, we think, with a kind of confused feeling, morning after morning the rising to toil and care will cease; there there will be no anxious calculations how to make the most of the little store which barely yields bread to eat and raiment to put on. It is oftentimes comforting to think of a place where we shall find peace and quiet: where 'the weary are at rest.'

O Earth, lie heavily upon her eyes;
  Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth;
  Lie close around her; leave no room for mirth
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.
She hath no questions, she hath no replies,
  Hushed in and curtained with a blessed dearth
  Of all that irked her from the hour of birth;
With stillness that is almost Paradise.
Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth her,
  Silence more musical than any song;
Even her very heart has ceased to stir:
Until the morning of Eternity
Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;
  And when she wakes she will not think it long.[1]

[1] A. K. H. Boyd.

4. But now let us go on to something farther and better. There is no doubt that when Job uttered the words of the text he was thinking first, if he was not thinking only, of the quiet grave. But though these are Old Testament words, we read them by New Testament light—as those who know that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life to all His people. We take the words in their higher and truer meaning. We know where it is that, in the best and noblest sense, 'the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.' These words speak of a better world. They point us onward to heaven. And let us mark what are the two great things they tell us of that glorious and happy place. The two great things of which they assure us, and remind us, are safety and peace. There are many things about that blessed life and world which our Redeemer purchased for us by His life and death which we do not know or understand, and which as we are, we could not understand or know. But these two grand characteristics of the life and immortality brought to light by our Saviour we can, in some measure, comprehend even now and here.

(1) First, there is to be safety, and the sense of safety. 'There the wicked cease from troubling.' Not wicked men only; but everything wicked: evil spirits, evil thoughts, evil influences, our own sinful hearts. All danger, all temptation, will trouble us no more. Everything evil, whether within us or around us, shall be done with. And who that can think at all but knows that if evil were gone trouble would go too! Where the *wicked* cease from troubling there will be no trouble at all. There will never be a cloud to obscure the Saviour's face; never an uneasy doubt; never a perplexing fear. There will never be an unkind word; never an unfriendly look; never an uncharitable interpretation of what was meant sincerely and well.

Where love is never cold,
Where loyal hearts and true

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

Stand ever in the light,
All rapture through and through,
In God's most holy sight.

(2) But, besides the negative assurance that trouble will be done with in Heaven, we have the promise of a positive blessing. 'There the weary are at rest.' We need hardly be reminded by what common consent the happiness and peace of the better world are summed up in that word. By the thoughtful even among such as enjoyed no revelation rest was taken to be man's greatest blessing and good. 'The end of work,' said one of the wisest of heathens, 'is to enjoy rest.' The wearied Psalmist summed up all he wanted in that word. 'Oh that I had wings like a dove! Then would I fly away, and be at rest.' And as if to answer and meet the blind gropings of humanity, come the blessed Saviour's words of invitation and promise: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest.' We know, too, how the Apostle says in a word what holiness and happiness await the Christian beyond the grave: 'There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God.' And we know, likewise, what the 'voice from heaven' said in the hearing of John: 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.'

I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail,
And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb
And out of the swing of the sea.[1]

Free Will.

Job iii. 23.—'Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?'

EVERY man knows two things about his own nature: first, that he imperfectly understands it; and, second, that he can only imperfectly control it. The moment we speak of control, however, we are compelled to take cognizance of the all-important faculty known as the human will.

Psychologists are unable to give us a satisfactory explanation of what is meant by will. We must therefore fall back upon experience, and speak of will as *power of choice between alternatives*. Power of choice may or may not mean power of action, but every man feels that he carries within himself this regal prerogative of power of choice, and no one could convince him to the contrary. Even theorists who deny the existence of free will continually behave as though they possessed it, and the ordinary practical man of our day and generation takes it as a matter of course that he has a power of deciding in favour of a certain course of action, even though he may not possess the further power of carrying his decisions into effect.

We do not mean to assert that every man's will is absolutely free. Indeed, without being unduly abstract, we may say that we can most readily infer the existence of free will by its conflict with forces that tend to deflect or destroy it. Will is certainly limited in various ways, and we know it best by watching its modes of operation in the midst of these limitations.

1. *Will is distinct from desire.*—Experience tells us that we sometimes earnestly desire one thing and have power to choose another, and the strength of our will is measured by the conflict between desire and duty. There are many things that we do not want to do, and yet we do them because we ought; and there are other things that we want to do, and yet abstain because conscience says, No. Nobility of character is invariably formed by this method, and we praise men or blame them, and rise in our own self-respect or sink into self-contempt, just in proportion as we consider obedience has been rendered to what ought to be rather than to what was merely easy or desirable. The philosopher who tells us that freedom of will is a delusion does not hesitate to prosecute the man who breaks his windows, and speaks hotly in condemnation of the man

[1] Gerard Hopkins.

who wrings a fortune out of the sufferings of the widow and the orphan.

2. *The will is distinct from the judgment.*—We sometimes judge a thing to be wrong, and then go and do it. The victim of the drink craving, or of the gambling mania, is well aware of his folly. He does not need to be persuaded of the ruinous nature of his habitual course of action, but he does not stop. His judgment is on one side and his will on the other. The accuracy of this statement may be challenged. It may be shown that the man, by repeated self-indulgence, has weakened his will to such an extent that it no longer possesses any power of resistance. But the fact remains, that at the beginning of his unfortunate career he chose, not once or twice, but many times, the course which his judgment condemned, with the dire results only too sadly common in our midst to-day.

3. *Will is most frequently associated with certain powers of action, but it ought not to be confounded with such powers.*—Christian in Doubting Castle remained in the dungeon of Giant Despair until he remembered the key of promise which opened the door. He had the 'will' to get free, but was helpless until the power was placed in his hands. Readers of Amiel's *Journal* will remember that the gifted and interesting author lived most of his life in the realm of imagination. He *willed* to live a full, glorious life, but lacked opportunity to realize it. Our every-day experience confirms these two instances. Some of us, doubtless, 'will' to be rich, but we may not have the power of carrying our decision into effect; or we may 'will' to be loved, or 'will' to be powerful, without having the means of obtaining either love or power.

On the other hand, none of us is so poor but that he possesses certain means of giving effect to his decisions. We can influence other people; we can earn money and spend it as we please; we can modify or develop certain of our own characteristics, and we have a certain power of self-direction and self-determination. Many persons are so constituted that they can will something, and then work toward it, perhaps through years of difficulty and opposition, until the day comes when they have power enough to realize the purpose in its entirety. Where this power comes from does not affect the argument. It comes from God, and is lent to us. Will without power is like a ruler without subjects, but experience tells us that the possession of a will is usually associated with some power of carrying into effect the decisions of that will.

¶ In religion especially, desire without will is practically of no value. Madame Guyon not only desired to be, but resolved to be, holy. Her *will* was in the thing—the will, which constitutes in its action the unity of the whole mind's action, and which is the true and only certain exponent of the inward moral and religious condition.

And here we find the greatest difficulty in the position of many religious men at the present time. They profess to desire to be holy, and perhaps they do desire it. They pray for it as well as desire it. But, after all, it is too often the case that they are *not willing to be holy*. They are not ready, by a consecrating act resting on a deliberate and solemn purpose, to place themselves in a position which they have every reason to think will, by God's grace, result in holiness. This may be regarded, perhaps, as a nice distinction; but when rightly understood, it seems to me to lie deep and unchangeable in the mind. In the cases to which we refer, the desire, whatever may be its strength, is not strong enough to control the volition. The will, therefore, is not brought into the true position. The will, considered in relation to the other powers of mind, constitutes the mind's unity. The will is wanting. The man, therefore, is wanting.[1]

4. *But the will is sometimes defeated by the operation of certain powers which work against it.*—For instance, the passions often prevail over a man's better judgment and feeling. The most melancholy instances of moral failure are the cases of those in whom, against their will, certain forms of evil surge and prevail. Such persons are indeed to be pitied. Many

[1] *The Life of Madame Guyon*, 77.

men are like smouldering volcanoes; one outburst of passion may ruin them. The recognition that passion is sometimes too strong for the will brings us very near to the border-land of the question of man's responsibility for his own sin.

From this position it is impossible to recede. If we admit the possession of a will we must admit some measure of moral responsibility for the use of it. Man's power of self-control and his power of influencing the external world are frequently limited, not only by the facts of his own nature which he did not create, but by the fact that external power is continually being brought to bear upon his will. Nevertheless, we must admit that we are so constituted as to feel a certain amount of responsibility for what we are and what we do. How far we are really responsible it is impossible to say. God, and only God, can be the judge of the extent of our moral responsibility.

¶ It often happens that we have long been blaming a man for manifest faults of character till at last suicide, or the disclosure of some grave bodily or mental disease which has long been working unperceived, explains his faults and turns our blame into pity. In madness the whole moral character is sometimes reversed, and tendencies which have been in sane life dormant or repressed become suddenly supreme. In such cases we all acknowledge that there is no moral responsibility; but madness, with its illusions and irresistible impulses, and idiocy with its complete suspension of the will and of the judgment, are neither of them, as lawyers would pretend, clearly defined states, marked out by sharp and well-cut boundaries, wholly distinct from sanity. There are incipient stages; there are gradual approximations; there are twilight stages between sanity and insanity which are clearly recognized not only by experts but by all sagacious men of the world. There are many who are not sufficiently mad to be shut up, or to be deprived of the management of their properties, or to be exempted from punishment if they have committed a crime, but who, in the common expressive phrase, 'are not all there,' whose eccentricities, illusions and caprices are on the verge of madness, whose judgments are hopelessly disordered; whose wills, though not completely atrophied, are manifestly diseased. In questions of property, in questions of crime, in questions of family arrangements, such persons cause the gravest perplexity, nor will any wise man judge them by the same moral standard as well-balanced and well-developed natures.

The inference to be drawn from such facts is certainly not that there is no such thing as free will and personal responsibility, nor yet that we have no power of judging the acts of others and distinguishing among our fellow-men between the good and the bad. The true lesson is the extreme fallibility of our moral judgments whenever we attempt to measure degrees of guilt. Sometimes men are even unjust to their own past from their incapacity in age of realising the force of the temptations they had experienced in youth. On the other hand, increased knowledge of the world tends to make us more sensible of the vast differences between the moral circumstances of men, and therefore less confident and more indulgent in our judgment of others. There are men whose cards in life are so bad, whose temptations to vice, either from circumstances or inborn character, seem so overwhelming, that, though we may punish, and in a certain sense blame, we can scarcely look on them as more responsible than some noxious wild beast. Among the terrible facts of life none is indeed more terrible than this. Every believer in the wise government of the world must have sometimes realised with a crushing or at least a staggering force the appalling injustices of life as shown in the enormous differences in the distribution of unmerited happiness and misery. But the disparity of moral circumstances is not less. It has shaken the faith of many. It has even led some to dream of a possible Heaven for the vicious where those who are born into the world with a physical constitution rendering them fierce or cruel, or sensual, or cowardly, may be freed from the nature which was the cause of their vice and their suffering upon earth; where due allowance may be made for the differences of circumstances which have plunged one man

deeper and ever deeper into crime, and enabled another, who was not really better or worse, to pass through life with no serious blemish, and to rise higher and higher in the moral scale.[1]

5. Finally, therefore, we may state as a corollary to the foregoing the apparent paradox that *belief in human will is consistent with belief in the operations of the greater will of God.* How this can be we can hardly say, but on the analogy of our own daily experience we can affirm it as a fact. Our little children live in a world of their own, but their world is within ours. They live their life under the shelter of our plans and purposes. We give to the little ones a certain limited amount of initiative and self-direction, and yet we know perfectly well that we have guarded against the possible misuse of the liberty we bestow. We know all, or nearly all, the possible permutations of their delegated freedom. The will of the parent is operative all the time.

Or again, to take an analogy from Nature, our world, which to us seems stationary, is moving at a great rate round the central sun, but with a motion of its own and an orbit of its own. But the central sun is moving also in an orbit beyond our ken, and carrying our world and the whole solar system with it. Reasoning by analogy is dangerous, and yet spiritual experience tells us that every man's life is a plan of God, and we may infer that God has a purpose for the race, a purpose which is consistent with and includes the gift of a certain measure of free will to His children. He knows all the possible permutations within the limited circle of human initiative, and the whole circle of our activities is carried forward, as it were, in the vast orbit of His mighty plans for the good of the individual and the race.[2]

> Through wish, resolve, and act, our will
> Is moved by undreamed forces still;
> And no man measures in advance
> His strength with untried circumstance.

[1] W. E. H. Lecky, *The Map of Life*, 71.
[2] R. J. Campbell.

On Preaching to Oneself.

Job iv. 3-5.—'Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.'

Eliphaz hits the mark here. The previous chapter is full of Job's wild protests against the misery of his circumstances, his denunciations of life, his longings for death. And the point that Eliphaz makes here is this. Job had in his time been a teacher and helper of others; his ministry had been a ministry of encouragement and consolation. 'But now'—here Eliphaz, having prepared his shaft, sends it home—'it is come upon *thee*, and thou faintest; it toucheth *thee*, and thou art troubled.' The man who was successful as a preacher to others was not quite so successful as a preacher to himself; the consolations he had ministered so readily and profitably to others somehow seemed to fail him when he needed them for himself. 'Physician, heal thyself,' said Eliphaz in effect. But Job, meantime at least, was too sore, too much crushed, too much wounded by the thunderbolts of God, to do so with any success. And the words he had spoken so readily to other men seemed strangely remote from his own necessities. 'It is come upon *thee;* it toucheth *thee:* and Job, who had been so ready in other cases with his ointments, had no salve for his own wounds.

The world is well populated with preachers, and often enough they are ungracious pastors who 'reck not their own rede.' The politicians preach, and are eloquent in telling the other side what ought to be done. Parents are preachers by nature. Masters and tutors are preachers by their calling. It is the privilege of friendship to give good counsel—to tell the despondent to look at the bright side and the tempted to play the man. It is the duty of old age to share its knowledge with youth, and even when the hoary head is not present there is sometimes no lack of counsel, as dogmatic and infallible as only inexperience can be. It all helps to keep the world right. But what about the preachers? Having so many ser-

mons for other people, have they any sermons left for themselves?

¶ Alexander Smith tells us in *Dreamthorp* how he found it more profitable to preach to himself than to have another man to preach to him. 'I go to chapel from habit, although I have long ago lost the power of following a discourse. In my pew, and whilst the clergyman is going on, I think of the strangest things—of the tree at the window, of the congregation of the dead outside, of the wheat-fields and the cornfields beyond and all round. And the odd thing is, that it is during sermon only that my mind flies off at a tangent and busies itself with things removed from the place and the circumstances. Whenever it is finished, fancy returns from her wanderings, and I am alive to the objects around me. The clergyman knows my humour, and is good Christian enough to forgive me; and he smiles good-humouredly when I ask him to let me have the chapel keys, that I may enter, when in the mood, and preach a sermon to myself. To my mind, an empty chapel is impressive, a crowded one comparatively a common-place affair. Alone, I could choose my own text, and my silent discourse would not be without its practical applications.'

1. Begin with the case of *sorrow*. Sorrow comes to others—it may be bereavement; it may be sickness and suffering; it may be temporal loss and disaster. We cannot help seeing it come, as Job in the day of his prosperity may have seen the hurricane strike another man's tent or disease another man's body. We have our consolations to offer: sometimes the conventions of social life shut us up to offer them and leave us no escape; some of us may even consider ourselves adepts in the art of consolation, and may hasten to administer the conventional remedies. We counsel resignation. We preach trust and submission. We point out that every cloud has a silver lining. We quote texts about all things working together for good. It is all very beautiful and true, and may or may not give the help we desire to give. But supposing that the sorrow came instead to *yourself*—in the words of Eliphaz, if it came upon *thee*, if it touched *thee*—would the consolations flow as easily round your own heart as they flowed from your lips round the hearts of others? Apparently Job's sermons to the sorrowful were all destroyed in the wreck of his fortunes, so that in the day of his own calamity he had not one left to preach to himself. And there have been some who, in the day of other people's trouble, were fountains of consolation, yet whose hearts, in the day of their own affliction, have been hard as the rock and dry as the desert sands. Let us try in our quiet and sunlit days to keep ourselves in the love of God, and pray ourselves into the meaning of His promises, that in the time of our own calamity, if ever it comes, we may know where to turn and what to do.

2. Or take the opposite case of *prosperity*. It may be that some of us have great ideas of what ought to be done with money, when it is in other people's hands. If we lack the courage or the opportunity to preach to those who possess it, we have homilies prepared in our minds which we feel would suit them admirably. Life is a stewardship. Wealth is a trust. Power and place and position are all so many opportunities of doing good. And if people could only be got to see that, how happy a place the world would be! It is all true, sound and useful doctrine. But take up the point of Eliphaz. Supposing all this power and prosperity came upon *thee*—supposing it all were poured into *thy* bosom—what wouldst thou do with it? Would you hold to your doctrines and put them into practice? Would you have so much faith in them as to apply them to your own case, or would you grow cold and hard and selfish like the rest of the world? You do not know; but there is one way in which you can judge. How are you using what you already have? He who is faithful in little is likely also to be faithful in that which is much. And the man who is mean on a slender income is not likely to develop a large heart merely because he inherits ten thousand a year. Let us live, whether we have little or much, very close to the Lord of Love, and for every sermon upon unselfishness which we preach to our neigh-

bour let us preach two to ourselves. So even prosperity would not spoil us, or obliterate from our spirits the sign of the Cross.

3. Keeping close to the great, common, elementary experiences of life, take the case of *temptation*. That is a subject on which many sermons are preached by a man to his fellows, and especially by the seniors to the juniors. You know what you tell your young people about temptation. You tell them it comes, sometimes from within, and sometimes from without. You tell them how omnipresent it is, so that the whole of life's journey must be a pilgrimage with girded loin and loosened sword. You tell them how insidious it is, lurking like a snake in the grass. You tell them how overpowering it is, so that they need the whole armour of God to help them to withstand in the evil day. You tell them how they need to keep watch and ward at Ear-gate, Eye-gate, Mouth-gate, over every approach of sense, over the stirrings even of secret thought, if Mansoul is to stand unconquered. Well preached!—it is all most excellent and most necessary teaching; and they cannot have too much of such instruction as they leave the shelter of home and make their perilous way across the world. But once more the point of Eliphaz: supposing the onslaught of temptation is upon yourself, have you faith enough in your own counsel to carry it out? Do you even think that the attitude of some of the younger folk to their temptations might be influenced by the attitude they see *you* take up to *your* temptations? Your temptations may be different from theirs, but as real, and to their eyes quite as visible. Not once or twice has some patriarch—not Job but another—told his children to read their Bibles, and allowed the dust to gather upon the covers of his own; or he has told them to keep watch over their tongues and tempers, and has kept his own temper on a very loose rein; or he has warned them against the sins of the flesh, and sunk deeper and deeper before their eyes into a cold and calculating worldliness. It is easy to preach, but the life is the best sermon after all: it is the sign that a man has preached to himself, and that to some purpose.

¶ There is a quaint passage in the diary of Thomas Boston, in which you see that fine, deep, painstaking soul preaching over again to himself the sermons he had preached to others. 'I observed that Satan has overcome me, even in those things that I preached against. (1) Preaching at Duns, I preached against immoderate sleep as a great waster of time; and quickly after I fell into this. (2) Last Thursday I preached that unwatchfulness was the cause why it is not with God's people as in times past; and the very same night my heart fell a-roving. (3) At this evening exercise I lectured on Hebrews xiii., and particularly that word 'Be content with such things as ye have'; and immediately after this, dissatisfaction seized me, for which my heart abhors my heart. Wherefore, being convinced of my danger, I resolved, in the Lord's strength, from henceforth to make my sermons the subject of my Sabbath night's meditation, and so to improve them for myself.'

Go back farther and higher to the greatest of all the golden-tongued preachers who have ever instructed the world—the greatest next to the Master Himself. He is closing what practically amounts to a great sermon, full of the passion of the gospel, full of the urgency of the loftiest ideals, all summed up in the phrase 'So run that ye may obtain.' But now hear how he goes on, with a humility that moves the soul when one reads it: 'I therefore run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself'—Paul the mightiest of missionaries—Paul the most conspicuous of the messengers of Christ—'*lest I myself* should be castaway!' So Paul preached his sermon over again to himself, and, as he so preached it, it was a sermon upon the broken and the contrite heart.[1]

¶ John Pulsford, in his *Quiet Hours*, has a word of forbearance for the preacher who cannot preach to himself. 'What!' he says, 'are the xiv., xv., and xvi. chapters of St. John's Gospel empty words, because, immediately after speaking them, the Lord fell into an

[1] J. M. E. Ross, *The Christian Standpoint*, 16ff.

agony of spirit, and even pleaded with His poor disciples for help?

If you examine into it, Eliphaz, you will find that just in proportion as one is fitted to comfort another *is his own liability to overwhelming distress.* To be a real comforter, a person must have profound sympathies; but profound sympathies are always in association with keen sensibilities, and keen sensibilities expose their possessor to a depth of anguish utterly unintelligible to ordinary souls. As is the capacity to be a heavenly comforter, such is the capacity to be an awful sufferer.'[1]

¶ Saint Jane Frances de Chantal was a preacher to others and not to herself. She was so tried and tempted that in the year 1641, she determined to resign her charge as Superior. When pressed for her reason she said: 'It is that my soul is in such a miserable and wretched condition that I am immediately attacked by all the spiritual temptations, trials, and repugnances about which our sisters consult me. God gives me the power to speak to them and to console them, but I am left in my misery.'[2]

Silence and a Voice.

Job iv. 16.—'There was silence, and I heard a voice.'

'I CANNOT pass that Church without going in to pray,' said one to me of a certain London church. And truly, for many times and in many moods, I have proved it. When you enter within its doors, it is as though the mantle of the spiritual world were wrapped about you. Almost irresistibly you kneel, and the lines come true:

> Earth breaks up, time drops away,
> In flows heaven, with its new day
> Of endless life.

Such an atmosphere I remember vibrant in the little church by Lake Qu'Appelle in Western Canada, adjoining Father Hugonard's wonderful Indian School. I came there as the sun was sinking, wearied with the long drive. The stillness and glory of the evening, and the beauty of the lake lying amid its circle of low hills, doubly welcome after the monotony and flatness of the Prairie, cast their spell upon us. But within the church was a living stillness of another order of appeal. Nothing that I saw in the West moved me as that still church. It had not even the first beginnings of external beauty, but it held within its walls that harmony and rest which is the very air of home.[1]

> As, in life's best hours we hear
> By the spirit's finer ear
> His low voice within us, thus
> The All-Father heareth us;
> And His holy ear we pain
> With our noisy words and vain.
> Not for Him our violence
> Storming at the gates of sense,
> His the primal language, His
> The eternal silences!

That is the prayer of Agassiz, the great naturalist. And that was the experience of Eliphaz the Temanite. There was silence, he says, and he heard a voice. How could that be? Turn to the experience of the Hebrew prophets and saints. How did 'the word of the Lord' come to them through those long centuries in which the Old Testament was growing? Sometimes, perhaps, in an audible voice like that which woke the sleeping child in the Tabernacle of Shiloh, but surely not always or often thus. More often in that impact of Spirit upon spirit to which many passages in the autobiography of the prophets bear witness. Thus the author of the 73rd Psalm, who describes so powerfully the temptation to utter unbelief caused by the blatant prosperity of the wicked, attributes his recovery from that temptation to a time of silent waiting upon God.

'When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.' This is evidently no theodicy, hammered out by human argument and the press of the battle of tongues. It is a strong, immutable con-

[1] J. Pulsford, *Quiet Hours*, ii. 266.
[2] *The Spirit of Saint Jane Frances De Chantal*, 6.

[1] C. Hepher, in *The Fellowship of Silence*, 24.

viction wrought in the prophet's mind by the action of Spirit upon spirit; it is a genuine revelation by God Himself to the troubled but seeking soul of the worshipper.

There were prophets who were installed in their office by some overwhelming vision such as that described in the sixth chapter of Isaiah; but there were also some, probably many, who could have said as Amos did: 'The Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.' That was assuredly no audible voice, setting in motion waves of air and beating upon the tympanum of the human ear. It was no such material sound, but it was the impact of Spirit upon spirit, an impact so strong, so irresistible that, as Amos himself said (iii. 8), 'The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?'

And this kind of intercourse, this unspoken speech of the Divine to the human, was assuredly not limited to the prophets of Israel, and did not die with the prophet Malachi. St. Luke tells us that Paul and Silas were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia, and that when they essayed to go into Bithynia the Spirit suffered them not. No audible voice, no writing in characters of flame, assuredly, but a powerful impression of duty wrought upon the minds of these servants of Christ—such an impression as made Livingstone the Apostle of South Africa and Selwyn the Apostle of Melanesia, such a sense of the continued presence of the Master as at this day comforts and guides every true missionary in his often difficult and perplexing work.

What are the conditions of such intercourse?

1. There must be *the sense of God's presence*. We cannot be in the presence of God, or at least we cannot wake to the consciousness of the Divine Presence, and not receive the speech of God. When other sounds have been made to cease, when the busy and restless brain has been stilled, and the whole nature, by deliberate and constant practice, silenced, then in that silence you will find the speech of God. The speech of God is not as the speech of men. He does not frame His messages in the words of any language. The speech of God is communication of Spirit with spirit. That communion lies deeper than words.

> Speak to Him, then, for He hears thee, and spirit with Spirit can meet:
> Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

2. *A special place* is an aid, if not a necessity. God is to be found everywhere, it is true. There could not be a more deluding superstition than that He is more truly present in one place than in another, or that the Ineffable chooses, as if by arbitrary fancy, favourite shrines for the manifesting of His Presence. We are surely well rid of the whole business of holy wells and sacred grottoes, of privileged sanctuaries and sepulchres, if they are to carry with them, as they so readily tend to do, the old crude conceptions of localized deity. But though the Presence is universal, the conditions favourable to its realization are not universal. God is everywhere, and may be found everywhere, but not everywhere equally easily.

¶ Francis Thompson is right when he tells us that had we the eyes to see, we might discern the presence of the spiritual in the London streets:

> But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
> Cry;—and upon thy so sore loss
> Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
> Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.
>
> Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,
> Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems;
> And lo, Christ walking on the water
> Not of Gennesareth, but Thames!

A great and not to be surrendered nearness this, but for our poor 'clay shuttered' souls what is vital is the way in which we may behold that heavenly traffic and moving Christ. If there be anywhere within our reach method or practice, from whatever source it may come, be it old or new, Catholic or Protestant, twentieth century or first, which will dissolve this

same clay that imprisons our vision, ought we not to welcome and make use of it?[1]

The Voice.

Job iv. 17.—'Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?'

This was the voice that came to Eliphaz in the silence. In the middle of the night, when apparently he was lying awake grieving over the problem of the sufferings of Job, he was suddenly seized with terror. Or he may have been asleep, and have suddenly wakened right up in a way we all know so well, with a feeling of dread concerning he knew not what. Then a cold wind passed over his face, and he trembled till his very bones shook; the hair on his head stood up, he says. This experience was succeeded by the conviction that there was a supernatural presence in the room. He knew it, though he could see nothing whatever. Presently the form stood still, and he began dimly to discern its outlines—a majestic, shadowy apparition. After this came a dead silence, a silence of peculiar intensity, and then a voice began to speak, and this is what it said: 'Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?'

Job complained bitterly that he had been badly treated, that God was hard on him, that he was being made to suffer unjustly, and—in effect—that God was treating him as he himself coud not have found it in his heart to treat anyone. In other words, his challenge was that there might be a humanity superior in goodness to the goodness manifested from the side of heaven. This is not explicitly stated, but it is what it comes to; and the answer to it is: How can a man be more just than God? How can he be more pure than his Maker? The stream cannot be purer than its source; its waters cannot rise higher than the spring from which they issue. There can be no colour in the flowers which is not beforehand in the sunlight; there can be no beauty of the lily or the rose which is not hidden somewhere in the heart of the cosmos before it becomes manifest as fragrance and bloom. There can be no human pity, love, or tenderness, no justice, mercy, or nobleness of spirit which was not first in God before it became revealed in man. As Browning makes his hero say in Saul:

> Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift.
> That I doubt His own love can compete with it? Here, the parts shift?
> Here, the creature surpass the Creator—the end, what Began?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I believe it! 'Tis thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive:
> In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
> All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my prayer,
> As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.

Talk about the goodness of God! He has a queer way of showing it! cries many a bruised and stricken heart. If this is goodness, what is badness? Some declare that the last kind of comfort they want to receive is any assurance of the love of God; they would scream out in protest at the word; the very sound of it hurts. They used to believe in the love of God, but that was before disaster came; it is worse than mockery to be told about it now. Does the love of God know anything about the anguish of a broken heart, the unspeakable sorrow of human love which has lost everything on earth and is nothing itself now but one incessant throb and quiver of pain! Listen to that lonely mother sobbing in the solitude of her chamber through the long hours of the weary night. Her boy, her only boy, the one child she had left—indeed, the one object in this world upon which all her wealth of affection was concentrated, the last the grave had spared to her—is dead. Her first instinct, like that of a mortally stricken bird, is to creep away by herself and indulge her grief unseen by human eyes. She has nothing for the world to hear, and the world has nothing to say to her to which she wants to listen.

[1] C. Hepher, in *The Fellowship of Silence*, 28.

There is really only one gospel for this, and that is the revelation of the cross of Jesus. The cross of Calvary completes the message of the text. If our blessed Master had never agonized thereon the mystery we are discussing would have been infinitely deeper than it is to-day. That cross is the sublimest paradox ever known; it stands for the greatest crime ever perpetrated and the grandest manifestation of the love of God. Nobody really knows or could explain just why Jesus had to suffer on Calvary; He Himself did not know at the time, could not understand why it should be the Father's will; and the fact that He did so suffer is as inexplicable to human reason now as it was then. That is one side of the matter; but now look at the other. Everybody knows—no one surely would dare to deny—that that same cross of Calvary has become the centre and symbol of the expression of God's love to man. Nothing else can for a moment be compared with it in this respect. The love of God has been declared through the cross of Christ as never by all other agencies put together before and since. It has consecrated sorrow and sanctified pain for evermore by bringing God right into them, or rather as revealing Him already there. The passion of Deity for the salvation of men, in a manner of speaking, is still going on in the human heart itself; and it will not fail; it will triumph over every ill and raise us to our Father's everlasting kingdom. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!'[1]

Though worlds in ruin lie,
Though man despairing die,
Though earth doth still Christ crucify,—
The Cross stands ever,
Failing never,
Love to glorify.

Unchanged from what it meant
To that first penitent,—
Symbol of Love Omnipotent,—
The Cross stands ever,
Failing never,
Of His Great Intent.

[1] R. J. Campbell.

God's love to testify,
Man's faith to justify,
All life and death to dignify,—
The Cross stands ever,
Failing never,
Of its sovereignty.

God's Love hung on The Tree;
Christ died—for you and me;
Christ rose again—for you—and me;—
So—Love lives ever,
Failing never,
Through eternity.[1]

Trouble.

Job v. 6, 7.—'Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.'

THE writer of the Book of Job philosophizes a little. Philosophizing is not without its comfort. Here he says that pain is not a substantial, earth-begotten thing, external to man—'affliction cometh out of the ground'—but a law of man's being, as much a law as that the sparks of a burning log should fly one way and not another, upwards and not downwards. Therefore man must take himself as he is and not quarrel with one part of himself more than with another. In another place he says, 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' Observe he knows nothing of Nature: everything is referred to God. Now, if we are going to receive, and there is only One from whom we can receive, we must take what is given, not fling back what we think is bad, for that is to be unworthy of, and ungrateful for, that which is good. That is an admirable theory, and a very rational way of looking at things. But sound theories and philosophical views have a way of breaking down in moments of great strain. And this Job found, for when the good seemed all to have gone from him, the evil only to stay with him, then he was as little a philosopher as the rest, and he most unphilosophically cursed the day in which he was born.

[1] John Oxenham, *The Vision Splendid*, 11.

Woe is me!
Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators? Great and mean
Meet mass'd in death, who lends what life must borrow.
As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

So Shelley in *Adonais*. And Francis Thompson—

Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
That is not paid with moan;
For we are born in other's pain,
And perish in our own.

1. There is a region beyond philosophy, as Job afterwards found. It is the region of spiritual faith. There lies the only refuge from despair. To set good against evil philosophically is very well so long as you have them both, and can weigh one against the other, but when misery breaks over you like a flood, and for the time blots out of your remembrance everything that has ever been good, then no calm balancing is possible. There is only one thing that can save you then, save your reason, your honour, your soul—trust in God, faith. Keep that, and the good is not all gone; this, the greatest good, remains. That was a sublime point which the sufferer reached at last, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'

¶ Science has made it clear enough that the forces of nature will not vary themselves for a hundred millions of people more than for one man, or spare one little garden-plot if four hundred thousand square miles are doomed. Rain and dew and wind and heat and cold are merciless, because if they are to fulfil their ultimate mission, if they are to make order and not chaos, they must not turn aside by a single hair's breadth. They have their courses like the stars of heaven. It is only by the whole sweep of their action through countless ages that their place and use in the divine economy can be explained. Who is sufficient for these things? All that man can do is to believe humbly and reverently that there is a great whole, a universe which, if it could be viewed as a whole, would account for everything which is unintelligible in the parts. There is a Cosmos, an ordered plan, which resolves into itself all the riddles and perplexities of his own little fractional life.[1]

Yea! trouble springs not from the ground,
yet must it ever be,
Man knows that he is born to care, so seeks his remedy;
And he hath found out store of charms and spells to give it rest,
Yet turns from human comforters, the highest is the best![2]

2. But one thing relating to pain is always clear—man's duty towards it. If the forces of Nature must act in one way, in many ways they may be counteracted. If they have no hearts to feel, we have; where they destroy, we may repair. God is always calling upon us to mitigate the severity of natural law by the tenderness of moral law. He would use the strong to redress the misery of the weak. Divine Providence does not arrest the destructive forces of Nature, but it does strive to neutralize them through human charity. Charity is stationed here on earth to act for man, but even more for God. She is His own most trusted agent. We are not sent here to speculate on the problem of physical evil, but to do what we can practically to solve it; not to murmur at the inequalities of men's burdens, but as much as possible to equalize them. 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ,' which is the law of charity, which is the law of laws, the law of God's own love.

3. A writer in *The Expository Times* (xxiv. 476) suggests a different punctuation of the text. He says: 'It is in the nature of things that sparks should fly upward, but the argument in regard to human trouble is that it is not in the nature of things. And although it is possible to make a strained connexion be-

[1] E. B. Barrow.
[2] Dora Greenwell.

tween affliction and the upward-flying sparks, there is no natural connexion between the figure and the experience spoken of.

But if we could place a period after the word trouble, and connect the next clause with the following verse, a new and beautiful meaning would emerge, and the figure of the flying sparks would be really significant. Why should we not read the lines in this way?

Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust;
Neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;
Yet man is born to trouble.
As the sparks fly upward
I would seek unto God;
And unto God would I commit my cause.[1]

Thus must Christina Rossetti have read the words of Eliphaz.

Lord, grant us wills to trust Thee with such aim
Of hope and passionate craving of desire,
That we may mount aspiring, and aspire
Still while we mount; rejoicing in Thy Name
Yesterday, this day, day by day the Same:
So sparks fly upward scaling heaven by fire,
Still mount and still attain not, yet draw nigher
While they have being to their fountain flame.
To saints who mount, the bottomless abyss
Is as mere nothing, they have set their face
Onward and upward toward that blessèd place
Where man rejoices with his God, and soul
With soul, in the unutterable kiss
Of peace for every victor at the goal.

Uplifting.

Job v. 11.—'To set up on high those that be low.'

God is an uplifting God: and there is nothing we need more than continuous and strong upliftings over the sins and sadnesses and weaknesses that keep us down. The blessed life is a life of peace, and God wants us to know fully what His peace means; but it is also a life of victory, and He wants us to know what that means too.

The world is full of over-burdened souls, some burdened with a load of cares, some with a load of sorrows, some with a load of regrets, some with a load of fears, and some with a load of sin. Burdened lives, burdened hearts, and burdened consciences there are in thousands everywhere; and it is not among sordid world-worshippers alone that they are found. Even Christian disciples are too often grievously overladen, and that not simply by burdens laid upon them by the hand of God as a discipline of faith, but by burdens of their own making, burdens due only to their faithlessness and sin, burdens which, if they were living in the full liberty of Christ's evangel, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, they would not carry for a single day.

Why do so many of us live only poor defeated lives, when they might be lives of victory? Why should our lives be only a constant sinning and repenting and sinning again—falling and rising and falling again—yielding and resisting and yielding again, and that always at the same points, in the face of the same temptations, in the same old way? This is a condition hurtful to ourselves, a hindrance to our brethren, an injury to the world, a dishonour to Christ, a grief to the Spirit, a disappointment to God. Is it wrong or irreverent to speak of a disappointed God? What then do these words mean? 'O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!' (Deut. v. 29). 'O that thou hadst harkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.' (Is. xlviii. 18). 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together . . . and ye would not!' (Matt. xxiii. 37). 'If thou hadst known . . . the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes' (Luke xix. 42). We know the 'Lamentations of Jeremiah'—do we not listen, in these words, to the *Lamentations of God?* Over our failings and fallings, our

[1] J. E. Compton, in *The Expository Times*, xxiv. 476.

backgoings, our faithlessness, our unbelief, there is the sorrow of a disappointed God, a disappointed Christ. If we are at all like-minded with God, this low condition of ours will be a grief and a disappointment to ourselves.

All true Christians have 'life,' for they are 'born of God'; but not all have that Divine life so strong as to be overcoming life, or so full as to be overflowing life—overcoming life that gives victory over both outward temptation and inward corruption, overflowing life that can spend itself joyously in blessing others because it is itself so full. What is the explanation of this? Simply that we are living so low down—lower than we might live, lower than we ought to live, lower than we have been redeemed to live, lower than it is safe for us to live. We live below our duty because we live below our privileges, below our occasional aspirations, below our prayers; and the worst of it is that we are so content to live in that low condition, while an infinitely higher one is within our grasp. What a disconcerting revelation of ourselves to ourselves it would often be to ask, 'Am I really living the kind of life that my Redeeming Lord would have me live? Is there anything in me that really distinguishes me at a glance from the unrenewed world at my side? Is my character different? Are my tastes and habits and ambitions different? Do I wear the name of God "upon my forehead," or am I hiding it out of sight somewhere beneath my dress? Am I "declaring plainly" whose I am, or are the marks of my discipleship so faint that even a microscope could hardly discover them? Are they like the old inscriptions often met with on a castle wall, and on the gravestones of a burial-ground long disused, so moss-grown and weather-eaten as to be undecipherable even by minute inspection?'

Paul speaks of the '*high* calling of God in Christ Jesus.' It is 'high,' not only or chiefly in the sense of being a call from One who is high, but rather in the sense of being a call to high things, and these not in the future only but in the present too; a high experience, a high fellowship, a high character, a high position, as well as a high destiny at the end. But do we not often speak of the 'calling,' and leave out the 'high'? We delight to hear about high privileges, but do we listen as eagerly when God speaks to us about high lives? We welcome what will lift us above the world's sorrows, but are we as eager to learn how to get above the world's joys, above its maxims and opinions, above its poor ambitions, and aims, how to live as the unworldly followers of an unworldly Lord, and surrender ourselves not only to all His *love*, but to all His *will*?

Do we want this higher power? then we must begin by rising into a higher peace; for we cannot fight against sin successfully except from the vantage-ground of assured and settled peace. Our first enquiry, therefore, must be, 'What has God to give us in the way of "perfect peace"?' and then, 'What will the possession of this peace enable us to be and to do for Him?' If we have first of all peace *with* God, and then peace *in* God, victory *for* God will be sure to come.[1]

Oh! thou clear spirit of serenity!
Thy home is still amongst us. In the heart
Of every man, who knows his life to be
A dedicated purpose, there thou art.
Nor doth prosperity perform a part
In his contentment. Energised by power
Of this resolve the busy day doth start,
And beareth fruit in every crowded hour,
And hath its end in his high-souled endeavour:
Not in achievement, which were hardly won
If barren fame or idle wealth were sought.
But its reward lies in the duty done,
And in the sense vouchsafed of tranquil thought,
And in the simple task which his own hand hath wrought.[2]

[1] G. H. Knight, *Divine Upliftings*, 3ff.
[2] Stephen Reid-Heyman, *A Vagabond's Wallet*, 29.

The Friendliness of the Stones.

Job. v. 23.—'Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field.'

Most of us have our favourite texts. This was the favourite of Dr. Joseph Bell, the great Edinburgh surgeon, remembered as the original of 'Sherlock Holmes,' but better remembered by deeds like this: 'A little child, suffering from that terrible scourge [diphtheria], was brought to the Royal Infirmary, and operated upon by Professor Syme; but the "poisonous stuff" had accumulated so much, and the air passages were so clogged, that there seemed no method of relieving the patient except by suction. Instruments for that purpose had not then been invented, and Joe Bell did the service required—sucked the poison from the child's throat, risking his life for that of a poor man's child.'[1]

'Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field.' The significance lies in the kind of man who is implied in *thou*. Eliphaz is talking—not of everybody—he is talking of the man who trusts in God. He is describing the man who is at peace with God, and who has entered into a covenant with the Almighty. And what he says is, Are you in league with heaven? then with the very stones you shall be in league. Are you at peace with God in your own heart? then you are on new terms with every bird, and beast, and flower. That is to say that a man's attitude towards Nature, and all the meaning that Nature may convey to him, depends on his spiritual and moral state.

¶ Everything is a friend to the man that loves God, in a far sweeter and deeper sense than it can ever be to any other. Like a sudden burst of sunshine upon a gloomy landscape, the light of union with God and friendship with Him flooding my daily life flashes it all up into brightness. The dark ribbon of the river that went creeping through the black copses, when the sun glints upon it, gleams up into links of silver, and the trees by its bank blaze out into green and gold. 'Who follows pleasure follows pain'; who follows God finds pleasure following him. There can be no surer way to set the world against me than to try to make it for me, and to make it my all. They tell us that if you want to count those stars that, 'like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid,' make up the Pleiades, the surest way to see the greatest number of them is to look a little on one side of them. Look away from the joys and friendships of creatural things right up to God, and you will see these sparkling and dancing in the skies, as you never see them when you gaze at them alone. Make them second, and they are good and on your side. Make them first, and they will turn to be your enemies and fight against you.[1]

1. This vital connection of the outward world with the grandeur or debasement of man's moral nature is one of the great and neglected truths of Scripture. From the story of Eden, with its idyllic environment, through the fall, with its curse of thistles and of thorns, on to the last picture of a new-created earth that shall be in harmony with new-created man, everywhere the Word of God shows us the kinship between Nature and the moral life of man. Does Israel forsake God and turn to idols? Carmel languishes and Lebanon mourns. Does Israel repent and turn to its God again? The wilderness shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. That is not the idle metaphor of poetry: to the prophet Nature was instinct with spiritual meaning. There was not an anemone in all the plain of Sharon but would be more beautiful if only man were good. Then think of the Nature-parables of Jesus, which are based on deep unities, not on chance resemblances. Think of what St. Paul says: 'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together,'—that is the Bible outlook on the world. The world is not a mere stage for a brief play. It is lit by our triumphs, shadowed by our guilt, touched by our sorrows, watered by our tears. By every right thing we do it is made richer. It grows meaner and poorer by every sin we sin. It is ourselves that are impressed upon the world. It is the story of our own hearts we read in

[1] *Joseph Bell*, 33.

[1] A. Maclaren.

Nature. We talk of the voices of the winds and waves, but the voices are only the echo of our souls. And that is why, when you get a soul like Christ's, infinitely beautiful, and filled like a chalice with God, the meanest flower that blows has got a glory with which even the glory of Solomon cannot be compared.

2. And when we turn from Scripture to the great poets, who are our best interpreters of man and Nature, we feel at once that the same truth is theirs—that man is in league with the stones of the field. For in the greatest poets Nature is more than a background against which the drama of human passion is played out. It enters into the spirit of the tragedy; it catches and reflects the hero's temper; in its storm and its sunshine, its fragrance and its rain it replies to the joys and the passions of the heart. In Shakespeare, when Lorenzo and Jessica make love every star in heaven is singing like an angel. When Julius Cæsar is going to be murdered, the night is full of wild alarm and portent. When the agony of King Lear reaches its climax, when he is sightless and outcast and goaded into madness, Nature responds with her own inarticulate agony, and there is thunder and lightning and uproar of the elements. Do you think all that is but a poet's dream? The dreams of the poet are sometimes the deepest truth. It is the witness of Shakespeare that God has made a harmony between the moods of Nature and the passions of mankind. That is the meaning of the storm in Lear. That is the meaning of the Forest of Arden. As a man is, so is the world to him—as is his heart so is his league with Nature. By everything we suffer, by all we do, by the hopes we cherish and the crosses we bear, new notes are heard in the music of the summer and new meanings are inscribed upon its scroll.

3. A thought like that has this value, too, that it brings Nature into living union with the Bible. For that is one mark of our inspired Scripture, that it alters and deepens with our deepening life. There are books that charm us infinitely when we read them first, but when we come back to them again the charm is gone. We have loved or sinned or suffered in the interval, and the old volume can never satisfy us now. But if one thing is certain in the world that thing is this, that the Word of God liveth and abideth for ever. We never exhaust it, never can outgrow it, never reach an experience that it does not know. It is the same book in every hand and home—Genesis and John are always in it. The schoolboy's copy that he carries in his satchel, and the well-worn copy by the bedside of old age—syllable for syllable they are the same. Yet what a different book it is in school days from what it is in the valley of the shadow; and the difference is not in the print, but in the heart. Joys have illumined it, sorrows have enriched it, tears have transfigured it, prayers have unlocked it. The rocking of the cradle has explained its love, and the open grave its message of eternity. Fatherhood, motherhood, loneliness, disappointment—all that we strive to be, all that we fail to be—these things transform into ten thousand messages the one book that is in everybody's hand.[1]

¶ In a speech which he once delivered at the Royal Academy Banquet, Mr. Rudyard Kipling delighted his distinguished audience by a parable concerning the origin of literature. 'There is an ancient legend which tells us that when a man first achieved a most notable deed, he wished to explain to his tribe what he had done. As soon as he began to speak, however, he was smitten with dumbness, he lacked words, and sat down. Then there arose—according to the story—a masterless man, one who had taken no part in the action of his fellow, who had no special virtues, but was afflicted with the magic of the necessary words. He saw, he told, he described the merits of the notable deed in such a fashion, we are assured, that *the words became alive and walked up and down in the hearts of all his hearers.* Thereupon, the tribe seeing that the words were certainly alive, and fearing lest the man with the words would hand down untrue tales about them to their children, they took and killed him. But later they saw that the magic was in the words, not in the man.'

[1] G. H. Morrison.

We need not go on with the legend. To Christians it suggests an irresistible application. There is one Book, above all others in the world, of which we may say that its words become alive and walk up and down in the hearts of its hearers. Long ago a wise king set forth this strange, unearthly effect in phrases which are always coming true: 'When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.' We do not account for such a result, when we ascribe it to 'the magic of the necessary words.' The spiritual charm and potency of Scripture refuse to be explained as literature.[1]

Harvest.

Job v. 26.—'Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.'

This beautiful verse must have been in the mind of Bishop King of Lincoln when he wrote to a lady on her husband's illness: 'The Lord of the Harvest is watching us, and He sees just when it is best for each one to be taken, and so He gathers us in. We may trust Him. It is sad indeed for those who are left, but it makes it easier for us to follow when so many are gone before.'

To another lady on her father's illness he wrote similarly, quoting the verse this time: 'I was afraid by your *look* that you were anxious. Well! there is only one real line of comfort, and that is in the knowledge that it is not our doing. It is all ordered from above, and, being so, is sure to be all well done. My dear mother gave me this text many years ago: "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season" (Job v. 26). Just in the best way, and place, and time! So our part is to trust, and, as you say, try to make all as bright as we can.'[2]

But let us look at the literal harvest field first. Every harvest field is a place of reconciliation between God and man. It is the temple where His Fatherly presence may be felt. It is the point of accord where Nature meets her human tenant, and crowns him with the glory of her sunshine, and the benediction of her peace, and thus bids him rejoice in the victory of order, of law, and of love.

1. The first parable of harvest, then, is that harvest is God's memorial, and *the parable of His love*. His promise is that while the bow is in the heaven, spring-time and harvest shall not fail. No year comes that that bridge of trembling beauty is not thrown across the firmament, no year that the rain and the light do not bless the earth and make it fruitful. God sets the bow for a sign, a bright watcher or minister, to declare His good-will towards us.

This may seem a very old or a very obvious legend, but at all events it is a truth, and one which we do well to remember. We who dwell in cities do not remember it, and do not care to ponder it. We have long ceased to live upon the fruit of our own soil. A good harvest or a bad harvest makes really small difference to us. Are not our ships scouring every sea, and does not the whole earth yield us tribute? Our bread is grown in Canada and Texas; our harvest is reaped in a hundred lands by men who never knew us and never heard of us. It makes scant difference to us that our little corn-fields do not whiten fast enough, and do not yield much; the weather of the whole world must conspire against us before men cry for bread in our streets. But because we no longer watch over English wheat-fields with the eagerness of fear, let us not forget that we are still fed from the hand of the Most High. There is great danger among us of both the callousness of prosperity and the presumption of security. We are no longer brought close to God in the tilling of the soil as our fathers were, and therefore we are no longer made to feel that, work as we will, we must wait for Him to open the windows of heaven. The uncertainties, the despondencies, the eagerness of hope and fear common to all tillers of the soil a hundred years ago, are gone for us.

But, so far from our independence of our own harvest rendering us more independent

[1] T. H. Darlow, *At Home in the Bible*, 20.
[2] G. W. E. Russell, *Edward King*, 223.

of God, it renders us the more dependent; for, to put bread upon our cottage tables, not merely must the summer visit England, but the Nile must rise in Egypt and the monsoon burst in India. Is it not said that when the men of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest, they lifted up their eyes and saw the ark of God, and rejoiced to see it? They looked up—they, girded for toil and wet with the sweat of labour—and lo! in the corn-field stood a holy thing, covered with the wings of the golden cherubim, and holding the mystery of God. Even so the Ark of God stands in our harvest-fields, more glorious than the autumn light, more golden than the autumn weather. If we lift up our eyes we too shall see it, and our thankfulness will take the Diviner tone of worship, while we rejoice with the joy of harvest.

2. The harvest is *a parable of life itself.* How little spoils both! How irrevocable the tendencies of each! A slight error spoils the year's husbandry, as slight errors often spoil a whole life. Throw your seed into the earth; it is there gone out of your power, and earth will not give it back again. She cannot give it back. She will silently receive the impact of your good or evil, the gift of your wheat or tares, and she will reproduce them, so that when the sheaf is bound and lifted up in the light of the last day, both will be there. Youth is wedded to age as spring is wedded to summer and spring-time to harvest, and that which a man sows in youth he likewise reaps in manhood. 'We sow an act, we reap a habit; we sow a habit, we reap a character; we sow a character, we reap a destiny.'

Or look again, and see in the corn an illustration of the solidarity of life itself. The corn travels the wide world over. It has no local limit, it is cosmopolitan. It is at home in the hands of the Arab, eating the few parched ears in his rapid rush across the desert, or in the hands of the disciples as they pluck it on the Sabbath day, or on an English wharf or exchange two thousand years later. It has gone into the Pyramid in the hand of the mummy, and has come out again after ages of imprisonment in the lap of corruption to grow green and strong in an English fallow. It enters the palace, and is welcome; and the cottage, and is straightway recognized as an inalienable friend. It has no personal life; its life is for the race. In every one of these respects is the parable of the solidarity of life revealed. We live in infinite relations beyond our relation to the soil we thrive in, and the age we are said to live in. We come into a world made ready for us as the corn comes. The bed is warmed, the linen is woven, the house is built, the road is made, the seat is kept for us. It is thus that the corn comes into the fallow which others have ploughed, and curls itself up in the moist earth and sleeps content. But does it rest there inactive? Does it end there? No; it repays the toil and trust of man, and leaps up presently and cries, 'I have had enough of sleep.' And then the spring calls it, and the winds whisper to it, and the lark pipes to it, and a million hungry mouths cry, 'We want you sorely'; and it thrusts its little green blade through the soil, and cries, 'I am here, and will repay in golden grain a hundredfold all the care and patience you have lavished on me.' And so it is with us, and it is ours to make the same response. We fell into the place others had prepared for us. We have appropriated to ourselves the discoveries of science, the wealth of truth, the moral riches of the ages. We sail on ships which others have built, we read books which others have written, we travel on roads which others have made. We are the heirs of all their labour, the residuary legatees of all their love. What then? We must needs keep up the tradition, and fulfil the obligation. We must go on toiling for others as others have toiled for us; we must even be ready to die for others as men once died for us. We must push onward into the wastes of human society, and sow them with noble deeds, that that which others left undone, because their feet were weary and life was short, it may be ours to perfect and accomplish. He who does not do this is a traitor to his race, a foul mildewed ear of corn, a thing which earth will not nourish and the very cattle will reject, a thing to be trodden under foot of men, as unfit for food or honour;

and he who does this shall come to his grave as a shock of corn, having served his generation by the will of God.

3. The harvest is also *a parable of death.* What is death? We know it only as decay, corruption, decomposition. We know that the earth is full of it, that it is one vast graveyard, walled in alone by the blue walls of heaven. We see birds, and fruits, and flowers all gliding down to its abyss: and we, too, at last totter down its dark stairs into nothingness. We can safely hide ourselves from malice there; in a few years our worst enemy will not be able to find a trace of us; we shall be mere bitter dust mingled with other dust—

'Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.'

But we know another thing—that decomposition is recomposition. Nothing perishes, because there is no waste in Nature. She sweeps up every shard and fragment and uses them again, that nothing be lost. And therein is the parable of the corn: 'Thou fool, it is not quickened except it die.' It lives to die: it dies to live. It dies to self: for if it could speak might it not protest against the sickle that severs its slender stalk, and the millstone that grinds it, and the dark earth that shuts it down in so stifling an embrace? Might it not cry aloud to drink the blithe air and wave in the sweet breeze, and listen to the lark's carol a little longer? But at the bidding of a higher wisdom it goes meekly down to its appointed place, and lo! the months pass and it lives again. It is multiplied, it is carried afar, it re-lives in a hundred fields, and men bless it, and bind its golden tassels on their chariots, and pile its yellow stalks on the altars of the church when they praise God in His holy temple. Even so, death is the lifting up of the shock of corn into fuller usefulness and life. Going to the grave is ascension, not descension: it is transfiguration, not annihilation. The man has reached a full age—it may be even in youth as we reckon life—for he is ripe and he is gathered, and his influence is consummated and broadened from that hour, so that it is 'forever and forever well with him.'[1]

Once, I was but a seed,
Brown and unlovely too.
I never knew
The kindly wind that blew
To meet my wistful need,
To make me, in that hour, a living thing
With dim potential power of blossoming.

And, yet, I could not live
The life I never planned,
Until a human hand
Laid hold of me, and taught me
That Life is given to give.
That I must die if I would truly be
The lovely thing the Giver saw in me.

So, in the dark, I died.
And there and then
Life found me;
Loosed the grave-clothes that bound me,
And let me go
That weary earth-stained men
Might see and know
How Death is but a doorway to perfection,
To all the glories of the Resurrection![2]

Tastelessness.

Job vi. 6.—'Is there any taste in the white of an egg?'

Sir John Seeley says, in *Ecce Homo,* that the sin which Christ most vigorously denounced is the sin to which the modern Church is most prone—the sin of insipidity. The pious commonplaces with which we glibly attempt to solace the suffering are often pathetically tasteless. The man whose darling hopes have been cruelly shattered is told, with a serene smile and an upward glance, that 'it might have been worse.' The man whose heart is bleeding, and worse than broken, is reminded that 'these things cannot be helped.' We indolently surmise that 'it is all for the best.' Tennyson tells us of the pallid consolations which were offered him in that awful hour

[1] W. J. Dawson.
[2] Fay Inchfawn, *Through the Windows of a Little House,* 35.

when the man with whom his soul was knit was snatched away to a premature grave:

> One writes that 'Other friends remain,'
> That 'Loss is common to the race'—
> And common is the commonplace,
> And vacant chaff well meant for grain.
>
> That loss is common would not make
> My own less bitter, rather more;
> Too common! Never morning wore
> To evening, but some heart did break.

In other words, the poet asked: 'Is there any taste in the white of an egg?'

We have no right to play with crushed spirits and breaking hearts. 'A man in distress,' says John Foster, 'has peculiarly a right not to be trifled with by the application of unadapted expedients; since insufficient consolations but mock him, and deceptive consolations betray him.' I remember very vividly a circumstance of my childhood. It was my first introduction to the problem of human loss, and it profoundly affected me. I chanced to be standing, on a sunny Sunday afternoon, by the gates of the local infirmary. It was visiting day. As I watched the relatives arriving I was struck with the appearance of a big brawny man from the country. He made no secret of his excitement. He had evidently counted the hours, and had spruced himself up like a village bridegroom for the occasion. He approached the porter: 'I've come to see my wife, Martha Jennings,' he said. The porter consulted a book, and then, with what seemed to me brutal abruptness, replied: '*Martha Jennings is dead!*' I saw the bronzed face blanch; I saw the strong man stagger. I watched him as he clung to the iron palings for support, and bowed himself in a passion of weeping. And then, as I stood there, good-natured people, pitying, essayed to comfort him. They rang the changes on the commonplaces. 'Other friends remain!' 'Loss is common to the race!' But it was of no use: 'All vacant chaff well meant for grain.' It produced an effect very similar to that of ipecacuanha! I have never entered the chamber of death in all the years of my ministry without recalling the tragedy I witnessed that Sunday afternoon.

1. Our commonplaces of comfort are insipid because they ignore the *illuminative* aspect of anguish. We forget the flood of light that streams from the Cross and that has transfigured tears for ever. Such frigid philosophy as that which we have quoted can be found in Marcus Aurelius, in Plato, and in all the stoical philosophers. And in them it is pardonable, even admirable. But from those who live in the light, better things are hoped. Christ has come! And from His disciples the weeping sons of sorrow expect, not the stone that would have been flung them by the Platonic schoolmaster, but the bread and wine of the kingdom of heaven.

2. The insipidity of our consolations often arises from the fact that we ignore the *purgatorial* aspect of pain. As though the torments of his body were not enough, Eliphaz tortured the soul of Job by telling him that purity and pain were incompatible, and that his suffering was the result of his sin. 'Who ever suffered being innocent?' he stupidly asks. It is the philosophy of the pessimist. It relates all suffering to a black, black past as *penal*. But the theology of the optimist relates all suffering to a bright, bright future as *purgatorial*. Poor Eliphaz did not know, but we ought not to forget, that a lamb, which was ever the emblem of innocence, has become also the symbol of suffering. If the doctrine of Eliphaz were sound, the sufferer can only grin and bear it. But it is not sound. And therefore the New Testament selects as its word for suffering the great word 'tribulation,' which reminds us of the 'tribulum,' the threshing-machine whose work is not to punish the wheat, but to sift it. The fires of God are never to devour, but ever to refine. It was because Eliphaz failed to remind Job of this that his hearers found the sermon so tedious. It made him cry, as with Hamlet:

> O God! O God!
> How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable!

3. The insipidity is always manifest when

the *sacrificial* aspect of suffering is ignored. There is a sense in which every sob is a sacrament. The sign of the Cross is stamped on all human anguish. You suffer for my good, and I bear sorrow for yours. Dickens unfolds this wonderful secret in *David Copperfield*. Mrs. Gummidge is the most self-centred, ill-content, cross-grained woman in Yarmouth. Then comes the angel of sorrow. All those around her are plunged in the shadow of a terrible calamity. And, in ministering to them, the whole life and character of Mrs. Gummidge was transfigured. David stood in amazement before the strange and beautiful transformation.

If none were sick and none were sad,
What service could we render?
I think if we were always glad,
We scarcely could be tender.

Did our beloved never need
Our patient ministration,
Earth would grow cold, and miss, indeed,
Its sweetest consolation.

If sorrow never claimed our heart,
And every wish were granted,
Patience would die, and hope depart—
Life would be disenchanted.

4. And the inspidity of our consolations often arises from their neglect of the *positive* or *possessive* aspect of human loss. Whatever has been swept away in the terrible cataclysm, the best always remains. In Lord Beaconsfield's great novel he tells how Coningsby, in bemoaning the loss of his fortune, is suddenly reminded that he still possesses his limbs. In *The Scapegoat* Hall Caine tells how Israel left his little blind and deaf and dumb daughter Naomi, and wandered through the wilderness of this world. And he saw a slave-girl sold in the market-place, and he thanked God that his Naomi was free. And he heard a girl curse her father, and he thanked God for the deep love of poor little Naomi. And he saw a poor little girl that was a lunatic, and he thanked God that Naomi had her reason clear. And then the great deprivations of Naomi seemed swallowed up in the treasures that she still possessed. As Mrs. Browning sings:

All are not taken; there are left behind
Living Belovèds, tender looks to bring,
And make the daylight still a happy thing,
And tender voices, to make soft the wind.

That is a great sentence of two words that the Mohammedan always engraves on the tombstones of his departed: *God remains!* Let us but cast these four ingredients into the chalice of comfort that we are preparing for the quivering lips of our weeping friends, and, so far from it producing an effect that shall resemble ipecacuanha, it shall seem to them as bracing and invigorating as the new wine of the kingdom of heaven.[1]

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Luggage of Life*, 113ff.

THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

Job vii. 1.—'Is there not a warfare to man upon earth?'
Eph. vi. 12.—'Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places'
1 Tim. vi. 12.—'Fight the good fight.'
2 Tim. iv. 7.—'I have fought the good fight.'

'The battle of life' is a metaphor which almost all men at some time in their lives realize and own as true. It suggests a picture which recalls to almost every man his own history, if his has been at all an earnest life. We may think that it has not been so with other men; we may look at some bright and smiling life and say with something of envy, with something also almost like reproach in our tone, 'Life has been no battle for him! How

smooth and easy all the world has been for him!' The man himself knows better. And we, if we come close to him, can perhaps see the scars and watch the battle going on. But whether we come close enough to others to know the truth of their lives or not, we know the truth about our own. Life is a battle. For ever on the watch against our enemies, for ever guarding our own lives, for ever watching our chance for an attack upon the foe—so we all live if we are earnest men.

I.

THE BATTLE.

1. *All life is a battle.*—'The struggle for existence' is a phrase which the writings of Darwin have made a household word with us. No life can maintain itself in Nature save at the price of battle. Whether it be shrub or flower or tree or animal, each living thing lives only by fighting for its life, and in the fight the weakest goes to the wall and is crushed.

Scientists divide the world into two parts—the inorganic and the organic. The inorganic world is destitute of life. The rocks, the sand, the crystals are inorganic. The plants and animals are organic. The inorganic or dead world remains comparatively the same from age to age; the organic or living world is undergoing constant transformations. Life is never the same for a single moment. But there is this marked difference between the inorganic and the organic world. Wherever you have an organized form of life you must have food. Organized life must be nourished in some way, or that form will perish from off the face of the earth. But with this necessity for food there arises the necessity for struggle. The food does not come to any one of us. There must be the effort to reach it. We behold everywhere this struggle for life, or rather for the means of life. The birds that fly in the heavens; the fish that swim in the sea; the beasts of prey that roam through the vast forests of the world, are all alike exposed to the stern necessity of finding the means of life, and if they fail in this endeavour there is only one alternative—that is, death.

The same struggle is being waged in the vegetable kingdom. We may all be able to remember a garden which had been carefully cultivated and which was a joy to visit and behold. But no sooner was the hand of man withdrawn than the garden was overrun with weeds. Even among the weeds there is a constant war, one class dispossessing another class until within a few years that garden will be occupied by successive armies of conquering weeds. Wherever, then, we have life in any form, either in the vegetable or in the animal kingdom, there must ever be the struggle to maintain it.

2. What is true of Nature is equally true of man. *All human progress has been through conflict.* The northern nations of Europe have won to themselves power through long struggle with the sterner and harder forces of Nature. A soft and enervating climate always debilitates the fibres of a nation's life. England itself has become the nation it is to-day through continuous fighting against foes without and foes within. Industrial and economic progress follows the same law. Commercial competition is only another form of the struggle for existence, and the struggle becomes keener and more bitter year by year. Labour and capital are like two contending forces occupying armed camps, and many who are anxious for the future of their country are wondering what the final issue of the struggle will be.

3. *The intellectual advancement of the race comes through struggle.* The triumphs of the human intellect have been bloodless victories, it is true, but still they have been victories, won after long battle with subtle and powerful foes. The glorious kingdom of truth has been conquered only by the soldiers of truth. No great achievement of the human mind, no discovery in science, no marked development of truth has ever been the reward of easy-going indolence. The men who sit on the high places of intellectual power have won their way to these great heights by daily and unceasing struggles and conflict.

4. *What is true of Nature and of human*

life is equally true of the moral life of man. No goodness is possible to man unless he is prepared to fight for it. Within his own heart is a battle-field on which armed hosts are continually contending. Even heathen moralists acknowledge the stern and unmistakable fact that there is a higher and lower nature in each man, and that a ceaseless warfare is waged between them.

The idea of conflict haunts all mythology; all the heroes of legendary lore triumph over some incarnation of malignant destructive power, or some guardian of hidden wealth. Even in India, the least prone of any nation to the idea, we have the legendary conflict of the *Mahabharata* side by side with the mythic conflict of Indra and Vritra. But when we turn to the Persian faith, this conflict expands to fill the whole space occupied by the history of this world. It arose in conflict, endures in conflict; it is thus to end. Legend and myth alike are absorbed by the idea of a continuous struggle pervading all existence, the antithesis of good and evil runs through all creation with an exact equivalence, so that the evil world represents no mere mutiny against the good, but a hostile power, confronting it from without; it ceases to be the expression of human failure, it becomes an ideal of all that against which human effort is directed.

Think of this suggested vision of the universe full of moral struggle. We can know nothing of what that struggle is in other worlds than ours. The fields of life are larger than we see, larger than all the history of man has told. Wherever there are beings of free will, there, whether it be in far-off stars or in the depths of space beyond the farthest star itself, there must be struggle, the possibility of evil, the choice between the evil and the good. And in no part of His universe can God be passive. Everywhere He must be the Foe of the evil and the Friend of the good. Everywhere, therefore, throughout the great perplexed tumultuous universe, we can see the flashing of His sword. 'His sword!' we say, and that must mean His nature uttering itself in His own form of force. Nothing can be in His sword which is not in His nature. And so the sword of God in heavenly regions must mean perfect thoroughness and perfect justice contending against evil and self-will, and bringing about everywhere the ultimate victory of righteousness and truth.

¶ In Watts' picture of the 'Happy Warrior,' we see what that triumphant end is. He is pictured as slain in battle. He has fallen in the thickest of the fight. Like the greatest Life ever lived, he failed as the world counts failure. But he succeeded in achieving the high end which he had set before him, beyond the range of most men's touch and sight. And out of his saddest experiences had come the purest joy known to humanity. And now in the article of death, the pain vanishes, the darkness disappears, the fear subsides. There is a great calm in his soul. His helmet falls back from his head; and an angelic form, the fair symbol of his aspiration, as the shining heaven above him opens to receive his parting spirit, bends over him and imprints the kiss of everlasting peace upon his brow.[1]

5. *The battle of life belongs to the Christian life* as to every other. The doctrine of free forgiveness is thought to be inconsistent with the principle that moral strength can come only from a personal struggle. Its promise of help is regarded as a premium upon indolence and presumption; and its reliance on personal sympathy and comfort and grace is said to be inconsistent with the self-dependence which is the prime condition of character and success. In other words, it is charged that the Christian life recognizes no contest at all; and that its injunction to fight the good fight of faith is self-contradictory in its very terms. But the plainest precepts and assertions of the New Testament are to the effect that the Christian life, from its beginning to its end, is a perpetual and active strife with evil. From the words that meet us in the Sermon on the Mount, 'Strive that ye may enter the strait gate,' to the saying, 'Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me,' one doctrine is taught and one only; and that is, that the Christian life in all its phases and forms is a continuous contest, in which every

[1] H. Macmillan, *G. F. Watts*, 185.

variety of energy is called for, and every form of self-denial comes into play.

'Christianity,' it has been boldly said, 'was founded by a young man, and, as compared with other religions, it is essentially the faith of the young adults.' Its appeal is to the vigour and strength that belong to a man in his prime. St. Paul takes his metaphors from the battle and the racecourse and the wrestling-ground: 'Fight the good fight of faith.' 'I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.' 'This one thing I do; forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before I press toward the mark.' 'So run that ye may obtain.' It is just the field of contest and athleticism of which young manhood so readily appreciates the charm. It is the aspect of Christianity —its manliness, its muscularity, its fighting spirit—that Browning has interpreted to us so faithfully, as one who would have nothing to do with 'the slothful, the mawkish, the unmanly'; as—

'One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break;
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

¶ 'The old war-horse was out to-day,' I used to say when the Dean had shaken his head with an upward look of grave defiance, as at some threatening onset that he foresaw bearing down. The war-horse! Yes! That was again and again the picture that rose in my mind as the slight figure drew itself together, and the eyes flashed. There would be no flinching in him when the trumpet began to blow: that was clear, as his mouth grew stern. After all, behind all the smiling veils, this world (one felt) is an arena in which the battle of the Lord goes forward. We shall not get through without a tussle, a fierce bout. Evil is strong, and may come in like a flood: and in the great day of Armageddon he at least would not be found unready or unarmed.[1]

[1] *Life and Letters of Dean Church*, by his daughter, 226.

6. *There is no discharge in this war.* This world is not to be for us an enchanted garden of delights, any more than it should appear a dreary desert of disappointment and woe. But it should be to us mainly a palaestra, or gymnasium and exercising ground. We cannot expect many flowers or much grass in the place where men wrestle and run. We need not much mind though it be bare, if we can only stand firm on the hard earth; nor need we lament that there are so few delights to stay our eyes from the goal. We are here for serious work; let us not be too eager for pleasures that may hinder our efforts and weaken our vigour; let us be content to lap up a hasty draught from the brooks by the way, and then on again to the fight.

What repose comes to a man's soul when he has once done that—the repose not of idleness, but of accepted work. No longer does he tire himself in trying to shirk what he knows is as true a part of himself as the drawing of his breath. He wakes every morning to his struggle, not with weary surprise, but with glad recognition that his struggle is still there. He plans for it far ahead as a thing which, he is sure, will still be with him. And his greatest wonder about death and heaven is how he can ever leave behind that which is such a true part of himself, and what it will be to grow in goodness against no resistance, how it will seem to do right when there is no temptation to do wrong which must first be trodden under foot.

Does the road wind uphill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?
A roof for when the slow, dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
They will not keep you waiting at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
Of labour you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek
Yea, beds for all who come.[1]

II.

ITS NECESSITY.

WHY is life a battle? There are more answers than one.

1. Some would say, *because of the inherent pugnacity of human nature.* Like Rab, the famous dog of Dr. John Brown's story, men 'can never get eneuch o' fechtin'.'

(1) Now there is no doubt that in every strong character there are strains of pugnacity, and some men reach the zenith of their power in opposition. The apostolic allusions to games and contests, wrestlings and warfare, show that the forces of emulation which pulsate restlessly in our blood can be transmuted into spiritual qualities; and the kindled consciousness of power which makes the soldier can contribute to the nurture of faith. Our trust in God and the victory of His cause rises to nobler heights with the difficulties which appear in our lot, and amidst the contradictions of sinners; and our hearts would not be satisfied unless this foundation-principle of character could show itself strong and valiant on many a difficult field.

¶ All his life long Robertson of Brighton was a soldier at heart. Again and again he expresses his conviction that, in a military life, the highest self-sacrifice he was capable of could alone have been accomplished. Those who have heard him speak of battle—battle not as an incident of mere war, but as the realisation of death for a noble cause—will remember how his lips quivered, and his eyes flashed, and his voice trembled with restrained emotion. Unconsciously to himself, the ring of his words, the choice of his expressions, his action even in common circumstances, his view of the Universe and of Humanity, were influenced and coloured by the ideal he had formed of a soldier's life, by the passionate longing of his youth to enter it, and by the bitterness of the regret with which he surrendered it.[1]

(2) There are those who even congratulate themselves, when life is ending, that they have contended so well. They count their laurels. They relate with pride how they worsted some competitor in debate or in business; how they shrewdly circumvented some fellow-man. They look at life as nothing but a battle, and, like some old soldier, live over in their age the fierce encounters of bygone days. It is hard, however, to have much admiration for such a spectacle. That a dying man should not be a man of peace is almost horrible. Even on actual fields of blood, dying enemies clasp hands and enter the other world friends. Can we imagine St. Paul flushing in his last moments with the remembrance of his valour? It was not this that made him glad. Our common translation misinterprets him. He did not say, 'I have fought a good fight,' as though his fighting qualities were the source of his satisfaction. He said, 'I have fought the good fight.' He rejoices not in his own bravery, but in the justice of his cause. He had not been fighting for self, or money, or office. He had been a warrior indeed—but for truth and righteousness. He had been contending against sin—in the world and in his own soul. He had been privileged to range himself with goodness and truth in their conflict with vice and error. This was his first source of satisfaction as he reviewed his life. Forced to fight, he had fought on the right side. Covered with wounds, he could say that every one was a mark of his loyalty to God. He was glad that he had fought the good fight; that, in a world of conflict, he had by Divine grace given all his power to the side of God, and truth, and righteousness. This was quite another spirit than that of an aged warrior telling over the battles of his youth.

2. The true answer is that *perpetual battle is the condition of progress.* That is why we possess the fighting instinct.

(1) It is by conflict that progress is made in *Nature.* It is no exaggeration, nor is it a

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

[1] S. A. Brooke, *Life and Letters of the Rev. Frederick W. Robertson*, 41.

mere figure of speech, to say that progress is accomplished through blood. The conflict between the plants which occupy the same space, between the very blades of grass on the same plot, between the trees which form the forest, may not literally be marked in blood; but they are marked, just as much as the competition among carnivora or among human beings, by the ruthless extermination of the weaker. When we pass from the plant to the animal world, we everywhere find conflict; life persists and is maintained around us solely by conflict—conflict arising from the fundamental conditions of existence, which demand an excess of reproduction. In the animal world this conflict is often waged under conditions of peculiar complexity; it is a fight for food between members of the same species, as well as against members of other species. The hare has to wage conflict within his own species for his food; he has to defend himself against the wild cat, the fox, the weasel, man and other enemies; and he has to wage a continual conflict in regard to climatic conditions and in regard to his adaptations to these. And in all these cases the smallest favourable variation counts: the hare whom accident has coloured more white than others will survive the rigorous winter, during which the less white hares will be more easily detected against the snow by their foes, and exterminated. Progress is accomplished precisely by the accumulation, throughout successive generations, of a vast number of small individual variations. Certainly mutation, or the sudden modification of a large number of individuals simultaneously, under the influence of a condition affecting all in an equal degree, does take place, more especially in the plant world; but progress in the animal world, as a general rule, is due to the accumulation of favourable individual variations, the ultimate cause of which is to be found in the struggle for existence occasioned by excessive reproduction.

¶ Matthew Arnold, in a well-remembered line, describes a bird in Kensington Gardens as 'deep in its unknown day's employ.' But, peace to the poet, its employ is all too certain. Its day is spent in struggling to get a living; and a very hard day it is. It awoke at daybreak and set out to catch its morning meal; but another bird was awake before it, and it lost its chance. With fifty other breakfastless birds, it had to bide its time, to scour the country; to prospect the trees, the grass, the ground; to lie in ambush; to attack and be defeated; to hope and be forestalled. At every meal the same programme is gone through, and every day. As the seasons change the pressure becomes more keen. Its supplies are exhausted, and it has to take wing for hundreds and thousands of miles to find new hunting-ground. This is how birds live, and this is how birds are made. They are the children of Struggle. Beak and limb, claw and wing, shape, strength, all down to the last detail, are the expressions of their mode of life.[1]

(2) It is by conflict that the *Human Race* makes progress. Start with a comparatively unevolved savage, and see what the struggle for life will do for him. When we meet him first he is sitting, we shall suppose, in the sun. Let us also suppose—and it requires no imagination to suppose it—that he has no wish to do anything else than sit in the sun, and that he is perfectly contented, and perfectly happy. Nature around him, visible and invisible, is as still as he is, as inert apparently, as unconcerned. Neither molests the other; they have no connection with each other. Yet it is not so. That savage is the victim of a conspiracy. Nature has designs upon him, wants to do something to him. That something is to move him. Why does it wish to move him? Because movement is work, and work is exercise, and exercise may mean a further evolution of the part of him that is exercised. How does it set about moving him? By moving itself. Everything else being in motion, it is impossible for him to resist. The sun moves away to the west and he must move or freeze with cold. As the sun continues to move, twilight falls and wild animals move from their lairs and he must move or be eaten. The food he ate in the morning has dissolved and moved away to nourish the cells of his body, and more food must soon be moved to take its place or he must starve. So he starts

[1] H. Drummond, *The Ascent of Man*, 241.

up, he works, he seeks food, shelter, safety; and those movements make marks in his body, brace muscles, stimulate nerves, quicken intelligence, create habits, and he becomes more able and more willing to repeat these movements and so becomes a stronger and a higher man. Multiply these movements and you multiply him. Make him do things he has never done before, and he will become what he never was before. Let the earth move round in its orbit till the sun is far away and the winter snows begin to fall. He must either move away, and move away very fast, to find the sun again; or he must chase, and also very fast, some thick-furred animal, and kill it, and clothe himself with its skin. Thus from a man he has become a hunter, a different kind of a man, a further man. He did not wish to become a hunter; he *had* to become a hunter. All that he wished was to sit in the sun and be let alone, and but for a Nature around him which would not rest, or let him alone, he would have sat on there till he died. The universe has to be so ordered that that which Man would not have done alone he should be compelled to do. In other words it was necessary to introduce into Nature, and into Human Nature, some such principle as the Struggle for Life. For the first law of Evolution is simply the first law of motion. 'Every body continues in a state of rest, or of uniform motion in a straight line, unless it is compelled by impressed forces to change that state.' Nature supplied that savage with the impressed forces, with something which he was compelled to respond to. Without that, he would have continued for ever as he was.[1]

¶ Sir James Paget refers to Mr. Darwin's teaching as to 'the survival of the fittest' thus:—'Man has reached his present state in civilized races through an incessant struggle not only for food and life, but for intellectual mastery; for virtue, as against those vices that are only brutality surviving; for truth, as against error. The influences of Christianity and of civilisation have made the struggle more gentle; the better sort of men do not destroy one another; but the law of conflict is not abrogated. The struggle which, from age to age, has ensured the survival of the fittest, has been under a law which includes intellectual conflicts, and has constantly helped to the attainment of the truth.'[1]

(3) And it is by struggle that the *Individual* makes progress. In the secret chamber of a single soul, hidden away from the light of the sun, rages a conflict deeper in its origin, mightier in its elements, broader in its compass, and more momentous in its issues than any outward war that convulses thrones and shakes continents. In the terrible strife there going on, myriads of spirits hasten to marshal themselves as combatants and allies; the clang of its unearthly weapons rings through all the realm of the Invisible; its vicissitudes are watched by millions of eager gazers in the high places of the creation; and its issues involve the weal or woe of a being moulded in the image of God and born to the high heritage of his eternity. This contest is the substance of which all others are but shadows. This is the one grand central struggle of which all others are but border skirmishes, and by which, sooner or later, they will all infallibly be determined. How goes the battle in the human heart? Tell us that, and we shall spare you the trouble of forecasting the issues of the outward struggles of society. They are predetermined. The results of all minor controversies are wrapped up in that of the one all-comprehending contest. When the citadel has fallen, it is hopeless to defend the outposts. When the heart has withered, any external bloom must be transitory. When the fountain is cut off, the streams must cease to flow. And so the currents of social improvement must necessarily dry up unless fed from vital and perennial springs of virtue in the individual soul.

¶ So powerful is Browning's interest in man as a moral agent, that he sees nought else in the world of any deep concern. 'My stress lay,' he said in his preface to *Sordello* (1863), 'on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so—you, with many known and unknown to me, think so—others may one day

[1] H. Drummond, *The Ascent of Man*, 243.

[1] R. H. Hutton, *Criticisms on Contemporary Thought and Thinkers*, i. 356.

think so.' And this development of a soul is not at any time regarded by the poet as a peaceful process, like the growth of a plant or animal. Although he thinks of the life of man as the gradual realization of a divine purpose within him, he does not suppose it to take place in obedience to a tranquil necessity. Man advances morally by fighting his way inch by inch, and he gains nothing except through conflict. He does not become good as the plant grows into maturity. 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'

No, when the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
He's left, himself, i' the middle: the soul awakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through this life!
Never leave growing till the life to come.

Man is no idle spectator of the conflict of the forces of right and wrong; Browning never loses the individual in the throng, or sinks him into his age or race. And although the poet ever bears within him the certainty of victory for the good, he calls his fellows to the fight as if the fate of all hung on the valour of each. The struggle is always personal, individual, like the duels of the Homeric heroes.[1]

Without, as I heard the wild winds roar,
And saw the black clouds their floods outpour,
As the lightnings flashed,
And the thunders crashed,
And the hurricane's force waxed more and more,
I said, as I looked from my window warm,
'Heav'n never on me send such a storm!'

Then came a dark day, when fierce and fast,
Down fell on my head the blinding blast!
Yet tho' sore assailed,
I nor shrank nor quailed,
For tho' loud the gale raged, as 'twould rage its last,
The struggle I waged, as I journeyed on,
Awoke in me powers before unknown!

I felt my hot blood a-tingling flow;
With thrill of the fight my soul did glow;
And when, braced and pure,
I emerged secure
From the strife that had tried my courage so,
I said, 'Let Heav'n send me or sun or rain,
I'll never know flinching fear again!'[1]

[1] H. Jones, *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, 102.

III.

ITS PURPOSE.

What do we fight for? What do we desire to gain by the battle of life? The struggle is strenuous and persistent, it cannot be a struggle for no purpose.

1. Is it money and that which money stands for? It looks very like it. Talk of the battle of life to the people at large, and ask them what it means! Ask the merchant, as he hurries to and from the exchange—the tradesman behind his counter—the operative, as, at the ringing of the factory bell, he goes to his daily occupation—the labourer as, at the dawning of the day, he yokes his team to the plough—and all these men will tell you that the battle of life is the struggle for existence—the effort, the often desperate effort, the not unfrequently abortive effort, to escape the wretchedness of poverty, to rise to comfort at least, if not to opulence. Yes, this is one great object of life. All day and every day, except the blessed Sabbath, a battle is being fought in all our great commercial cities. It surges and it rages through all our thoroughfares, and the prize which all men have in view is money. By fair means and by foul; by patient, plodding, persevering industry; by shrewd, well-calculated, but strictly honourable, commercial transactions; by daring strokes of wild and reckless speculation, and, unhappily, by ingenious but frightful fraud, men push, and thrust, and fight their way upward and onward in the world.

And this struggle is right. It is a struggle much to be commended and admired, so long

[1] T. Crawford, *Horæ Serenæ*, 17.

as it is honourably maintained, so long as no man goes beyond or defrauds his brother, so long as the victors are not flushed with insolence, or the vanquished driven to despair. It is a heart-thrilling sight to see the commerce of a great city, to observe myriads of men thus fighting their life-battle; and, to those who stand at a distance from the scene of conflict, there is something solemn and beyond expression grand in the roar that reverberates for miles around the great field on which some are conquering and others are being conquered. It is grander than the booming of the distant cannonade, it is grander than the voice of the stormy sea. Vulgar enough, in one sense, is the sound—the confused din of hammers, and rollers, and looms, the tramp of horses, and the rattle of wheels; but these sounds are the clashing of the weapons by means of which men are fighting for existence; and when we consider all that such sounds suggest, the activity, the energy, the wisdom, the folly, the hopes, the fears, the success, the unsuccess, the triumph, the desperation of multitudes, we cannot but feel that the artillery of the thunderstorm itself is not more awful than this great battle-hurly of humanity in its terrible struggle for bread.

2. Is it knowledge? Certainly, before we can say that a man has won the battle of life we must ask if he has grappled with his ignorance. One great object of life is to make conquests in the domain of knowledge; to master difficulties there, to make good our footing there, to add house to house and field to field there.

¶ It is one of the most cheering signs of the times that there exists among the people, and especially among our operatives, a very ardent thirst for knowledge. It will not do for men, in these days, to pour contempt on this desire, to repress it, to say 'let the shoemaker stick to his last.' This is a wretched maxim, which would bring us all to a deadlock. If it had been acted upon by a young shoemaker who laboured at the last in Northamptonshire, oriental literature would never have secured the invaluable services of William Carey, and Christian missions would have been destitute of one of their noblest ornaments. If it had been suffered to influence a certain tinker who mended pots and pans in Bedfordshire, the *Pilgrim's Progress* would never have been written. If it had been the motto of a certain bricklayer who worked at the building of Lincoln's Inn, 'and while he had a trowel in his hand had a book in his pocket,' we never should have heard of 'rare Ben Jonson.' According to this principle Defoe ought to have been content to sell stockings over his counter in Cornhill, and made a great mistake when he wrote *The Strange, Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*. This maxim would have bound Burns to his plough and shut up Quintin Matsys in his smithy at Antwerp. But no, this proverb will not stand the test of experience; there are too many facts which triumphantly refute it: from the working-men, the tailors, the shoemakers, the carpenters, the masons, the shepherds, the sailors, the fishermen, have arisen many of the names of which the world has the greatest reason to be proud; and at this day, among the foremost men in literature, science, and art, are not a few who have sprung from the humblest ranks in life—'shoemakers,' in fact, who, very wisely, did not 'stick to the last.' [1]

3. But the battle of life is not won by those who have made money and have gained knowledge. St. Paul says he had fought this fight, and certainly he had fought neither for the one nor for the other. By word and life he taught that there are some things worthier our struggle than all else, and that satisfaction will come if we can feel that we have contended for these things. There is one fight going on all the time, which is called, by pre-eminence, 'the good fight.' It is the copy in our world of the struggle of the angel powers themselves. It is the battle of light with darkness. It is the gigantic effort of the human soul, under the influence of God, to overcome its lusts, to cleanse its abode of the shames and wrongs which foul them. It is the struggle of the mind to shake off the fetters of ignorance and slavish fear, and to come out into the sunlight of God's truth.

[1] H. S. Brown.

Thus the good fight is simply God's fight. And we fight it when we are loyal to God—the God who is made known to us in Jesus Christ. A young man sets out from college determined to do what he can to help to set right the evils that are in the world. The ordinary careers which attract men have no attraction for him. He does not care to be rich, or perhaps he is rich already. At any rate, he takes his life in his hand and freely, genuinely, gives it to his fellow-men. What a tumult it is into which he casts himself, what a disorder, what a crossing and recrossing of interests, what a snarl of difficult problems! It is like trying to push back the sea, which eludes you at every instant and with its fluid mass is as solid as the rock itself. But can we not see at once what a difference it will make to this young worker against evil if he is able to think of the great fight in which he is engaged not merely as his fight but as God's fight; as his fight because it is God's fight and he is God's? Suppose that he is large enough, religious enough, to look abroad and see God gradually occupying the earth with the eternal principles of His righteousness. Every special victory of human progress, the victory over slavery, the victory over superstition, the victory over social wrong, nay, even the victory over tough matter, the subduing of the hard stuff of Nature to spiritual uses, each of these is but a footstep in the great onward march of God taking possession of His own. Must it not make a difference to the young reformer whether he is able to think of his struggle thus, or whether he is able merely to think of himself as the empirical student of political economy or social science, or as the expression of an instinctive human sympathy? The poor are God's poor. The slave is God's freeman. This oppressive institution is a blot on God's earth. Surely if he catches that meaning in it all, his whole struggle must be intensified and purified. His struggle may still keep the other truths and motives, but it surrounds them all with this larger and loftier one. Two things especially must come as the result of such a consciousness—the spirit of thoroughness and the spirit of justice. The young man really counting his struggle God's must determine never to be satisfied until the victory is complete, and he must shrink from and refuse every temptation to use any weapons except the weapons of righteousness in a battle which belongs not merely to himself but to the Lord of all righteousness and truth.

¶ The reformers who have really done the work have been those who have dared to call their work a work of God. It has been the voice of God in their ears, it has been the sword of God flashing at their side which has made them courageous as fire and persistent as iron.[1]

IV.

THE VICTORY.

1. The Battle of Life ends, and it is meant to end, in victory. So St. Paul was at once stern and joyous. 'As sorrowful, but always rejoicing'; and the joy came, in his mind, directly out of the sorrow. Nor, indeed, was it so much sorrow in our personal sense of the word that he meant as tribulation—the general trouble that arises from facing the difficulties and temptations of the Christian warfare, from standing firm against the world, from self-subjugation. Life was to him a pursuit, a race, a battle; but a pursuit which should attain, a race which had a goal, a battle which was to end in victory. The struggle was constant, the watchfulness should be unvarying, the armour with which he armed the Christian soldier always ready. Yet, the end was worth all the trouble, and the battle made the soul. 'So fight I, not as one that beateth the air.' 'I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

¶ Charles Reade writes thus glowingly of one of his characters who had vanquished the tempter: 'Well done, sullen and rugged but honest man; the capital temptation of your life is wrestled with and thrown. That is always to every man a close, a deadly, a bitter struggle; and we must all wade through this deep water at one hour or another of our lives; it is as surely our fate as it is one day to die.' Yes, that crucial struggle comes to all; but

[1] Phillips Brooks.

if, by the grace of God, we overcome, the struggle gloriously strengthens and enriches our whole being. We are greater in mind, stronger in principle, purer in spirit, larger in capacity for joy and service. Suwarrow, the Russian general, having captured an enemy's town, emptied the magazine and struck the bullets into medals for his troops, so that what was meant to pierce the soldier's breast shone on it an ornament and glory. Whilst in the fiery ordeal we abide loyal to God's love and righteousness, the missiles which hurtle through the air are transformed into jewels for our bosom, stars for our brow. In other words, the strife of life gives fullness, perfection, confirmation to all the graces of our spirit.[1]

2. The victory is Christ's, and ours in Him. This is the solution of the great Apostle to the Gentiles. The seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans is the record of a battle, a fierce and prolonged conflict, between the good and the evil—'the good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not, that I do.' It ends with a sudden shout of triumph: 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' This Name suggests the whole. Atonement, justification, redemption, freedom, moral power and purity, spiritual life culminating in life eternal, are all wrapped up in that one all-potent Name. It is the talismanic word which transforms a scene black with the pall of death into a scene radiant with heavenly glory; which bids the slave start into freedom, the sick into health, the dead into life.

Our Christian faith is this: that the struggle of Christ with sin was more than one event in the long fight of humanity with sin, however splendid that event might be. It was the consummation and essential completion of the struggle. It was the victory. It was the King coming down into the battle to finish it, to give the blow that should assure its end. The struggle still goes on, each soldier struggles still; but each struggles in a strife already won, and lays hold of a victory already certain. Do we understand that truth—how great, how deep, how glorious it is? Let us know the Life of Christ more deeply. Let us read it and meditate upon it, and let it freely in to show its power upon our lives; and then, when we have laid hold of His Divinity, it will seem simply impossible that such as He is should have lived and died in strife with sin, and yet have left sin as He found it. No power of victory that is attributed to such a life as His can seem too great to be true.

O Christ, what burdens bowed Thy head!
  Our load was laid on Thee;
Thou stoodest in the sinner's stead,
  Bearing all ill for me:
    A victim led,
    Thy blood was shed;
  Now there's no load for me.

Death and the curse were in our cup;
  O Christ, 'twas full for Thee!
But Thou hast drained the last dark drop;
  'Tis empty now for me:
    That bitter cup,
    Love drank it up;
  Now blessing's draught for me!

The Holy One did hide His face;
  O Christ, 'twas hid from Thee!
Dumb darkness wrapt Thy soul a space,
  The darkness due to me:
    But now that face
    Of radiant grace
  Shines forth in light on me.

For me, Lord Jesus, Thou hast died,
  And I have died in Thee;
Thou'rt risen; my bands are all untied,
  And now Thou liv'st in me.
    When purified,
    Made white, and tried,
  Thy glory then for me![1]

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Education of the Heart*, 137.

[1] Anne R. Cousin.

The Web of Life.

Job vii. 6.—'My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle.'

Some of the Scriptural references to weaving are very interesting. There was some very fine woven work done by the Israelites in the wilderness in connection with the making of the tabernacle. We are told that God filled those who wrought that work with wisdom of heart to work all manner of work of the weaver. The Israelites had just come from Egypt, and there, undoubtedly, many of them learned their mechanical proficiency in weaving, as is suggested by Isaiah when he describes the Egyptians as those who work in fine flax, and who weave. Specimens of very fine Egyptian woven work can be seen in the wrappings of the mummies, centuries old.

Perhaps the most familiar reference to the work of the weaver is this in the Book of Job. What does the illustration suggest?

1. The first and obvious thought of the text is the swiftness of passing time, like the shuttle of the weaver as it darts to and fro across the web. The judgment we form of the swift movement of time depends on the stage of life from which we view it. To the young it is one thing, to the old it is another. To youth a year is an age; to middle life it shrinks to three hundred and sixty-five days; to old age it dwindles to a few weeks. In life the first steps of time are slow, and impatience of the restraints and tardiness of time is the feeling which frets the eagerness and premature haste of youth; the next are quicker in their pace, as duties multiply and mind and heart are engrossed in the work and care of life; when age draws on, the steps of time are so accelerated that we scarce take note of the months and years in their rapid flight. They are but as 'a tale that is told.' The measurement of time at each of these stages is the same, but the conscious movement of the days is very different. The explanation is to be found in the fact that the mind is more largely engaged in the later stages of life than in the earlier. The true life of man is not measured by time at all in itself—not by days and years—but by the thoughts and purposes that fill the mind and engage the heart.

'We live in deeds, not years;
In thoughts, not breaths:
In feelings; not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs, He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.' [1]

When great and good thoughts, great and good deeds of God-like character, occupy the mind, and we think of the soul and its salvation and work in view of Christ and eternity, then the mind sweeps over the years as with lightning speed, and we hasten on to grasp the thought and the blessedness that remain when the years are gone. It is when we trifle and are idle that time moves heavily. It is when a man thinks only of the things that are seen and that minister to the pleasures of sin and sense that he broods in melancholy fashion over the swiftness of time, and clutches it with a miser's grasp. It is when we think more of the quality of our life than of the quality of our days that we come to look on time as but the stepping-stone to higher things. The swiftness of our passing hours is only the rapid movement of the eager and aspiring Christian heart towards the enduring result which comes out of patient thought and prayer. Thus we learn what is meant when it is said that 'one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,' for every day of thought and work for God has in it the breath and promise of a thousand years, and a thousand years are but a day in the endlessly progressive life that is spent in His service and fear.

2. But this teaching is further enforced by a second fact of which the weaver's work is suggestive, that each moment as it fleets leaves its trace behind. As the shuttle slides along the loom, it slips a line of thread, or wool, or silk, to be a lasting record of its passage. And, when the work is done and the web is exam-

[1] P. J. Bailey, *Festus*.

ined, its value depends on the care with which each little line has been set, of the right material, in the right manner, in the right place.

And so is it with life. Sir Edwin Arnold, in *The Light of Asia,* speaks of—

'The self it wove, with woof of viewless times,
Crossed on the warp invisible of acts.'

And assuredly the analogy holds good. Yes, each thought, each heart-throb, each act leaves its trace behind. We are every moment weaving our history. And when our life-work shall come to be examined in the light of eternity, each moment's fidelity or carelessness will be found duly recorded. Every instance in which we have let the stitches slip or the threads tangle will tell its own tale. It will then be seen how much the beauty of life's whole has been made or marred by attention, or its lack, to life's littles. Let us therefore bear in mind that the quickest thought that flashes through our mind leaves its line, that the most transient feeling adds its item to the whole texture of character, and that every act we do contributes its thread to the tensity of any tendency.

3. Another analogy from the weaver's work is the comforting fact that we are called upon to work out a life-plan which has been previously and wisely devised for us. You know that much preparation is made previous to the weaver's starting his work. A design is drawn by a skilled hand and enlarged. Afterwards, the material required is threaded to form the warp and is gathered into the harness in harmony with the plan. And the whole is so adjusted that the progress of the pattern shall regulate the passage of the woof as it is shot by the shuttle, and shall determine what threads, and how many, shall be bound in succeeding parts into the fabric to be woven. In a word, the weaving is made to accord with the design by an elaborate arrangement previously made. And the web of life resembles it in this respect. God has conceived a life-plan for every child of man, has marked his course, has stamped a particular feature on his career, has determined when the dark colour of sorrow and when the bright threads of joy shall be fastened into the texture of his life, and has so regulated the whole that each man shall throw the thread of daily life across a succession of pre-ordained circumstances. This, surely, is a matter for rejoicing. It is a satisfaction to know that One wiser than we, One who knows exactly our capabilities, has determined for us our duty, and ordained our lot. Yet, when gloomy colours succeed to gay, when dark sorrows are made to blend with life's web, how often do we complain. In future, let us cease to murmur. In future let us bear in mind that the sombre shades are part of His plan who knows how to make all contribute ultimately to the best result.

¶ Francis Bacon wrote: 'Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes; and adversity is not without comforts and hopes. We see, in needlework and embroideries, it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground; judge therefore of the pleasure of the heart by the pleasure of the eye.' By-and-by the gloomy facts which are blended with life will throw into relief those graces which will stand out brightly from them, if we turn life's troubles to good account. Let us, then, receive these with meek acquiescence, in the assurance that they are working together for our good.[1]

As at their work two weavers sat,
Beguiling time with friendly chat,
Quoth Dick—
'In spite of what the Scripture teaches,
In spite of what the pulpit preaches,
This world (indeed, I've thought so long)
Is ruled, methinks, extremely wrong.
Where'er I look, howe'er I range,
'Tis all confused, and hard, and strange.
The good are troubled and opprest,
And all the wicked are the blest.'

Quoth John, 'Our ignorance is the cause
Why thus we blame our Maker's laws.
Parts of His ways alone we know
'Tis all that man can see below.
As when we see these shreds and ends.

[1] H. V. Der H. Cowell.

We know not what the whole intends,
So, when on earth things look but odd,
They're working out some scheme of God.
No plan, no pattern, can we trace,
All wants proportion, truth, and grace;
What now seems random strokes will *there*
All order and design appear.
Then shall we praise what here we spurned.'

'Thou'rt right,' quoth Dick, 'no more I'll grumble—
That this world is so strange a jumble,
My impious doubts are put to flight,
For my own weaving sets me right.'

The Visitations of God.

Job vii. 17, 18.—'What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? and that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?'

This is a cry wrung from the heart of a man who was passing through a season of awful tribulation. His life, which was formerly smooth and prosperous, had become, all at once, a very tragedy of sorrow. The storm-cloud, rapidly gathering, had grown heavier and blacker, and had darkened his whole sky from horizon to horizon. The thunders had broken over him, crash after crash, in swift succession; and the lightnings were even yet playing about him from the lurid cloud. Not one gleam of hope was visible throughout the whole range of his earthly circumstances. His misfortunes had indeed come 'in battalions.' Stroke after stroke had taken away from him his property, his servants, his sons and daughters; and that, too, not in any ordinary manner, but suddenly, swiftly, and by terrible visitations. And now, to crown all, he is himself smitten by a painful and loathsome disease, which threatens his very life. 'To crown all'? No—even this is not yet his 'sorrow's crown of sorrow.' For, as he sits there, impoverished, bereaved, and wrestling with misfortune and disease, his own wife must needs taunt him and tempt him to 'curse God,' and his three 'friends' who come ostensibly 'to mourn with him and comfort him,' must needs wound him with the accusation of secret iniquity. What wonder if Job, thus crushed to the very dust by his calamities and by his friends, deserted, as it seemed, by both God and man, and left to wrestle all alone with his sorrow, should out of his weakness utter this cry of remonstrance to the Almighty: 'Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? . . . What is man, that thou magnifiest him, and that thou turnest thy thought towards him? And visitest him every morning, and triest him every moment?'

These words, then, are very different in their tone and spirit from the words in the eighth Psalm, which they somewhat resemble: 'When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him?' There the Psalmist is struck with admiration at the grace and goodness of the Almighty, in that He who has made the glorious heavens should condescend to bestow such blessing and honour on a creature so insignificant as man. But here Job, feeling himself overwhelmed by his calamities, is remonstrating with God for taking so much notice of man as even to visit him with trial. Why cannot the Almighty let a poor worm alone? It seems to him unworthy of the Omnipotent thus to trample upon the fallen—thus to 'slay the slain.' It seems to him quite an extravagant expenditure of energy thus to overwhelm a creature already weak and helpless enough. If he had been a 'sea,' or a 'whale,'—some huge and formidable monster of the deep—then it might perhaps have been needful thus to 'watch' and to beset him. But that the Almighty should, as it were, go out of His way, to 'break a mere leaf' that is already 'driven to and fro' by the wind—this is inexplicable to the poor crushed sufferer. Surely it is 'magnifying' man unduly—it is making altogether too much of a creature so frail—for God thus to 'turn His thoughts towards man,' and visit him with such incessant and overwhelming trials!

Let us try to answer some of Job's questionings.

1. It is because of *the dignity of man* that God visits him. The conflict and sorrow of human life are indubitable signs of dignity. We often enough look poor, feel poor, but we cannot *be* poor. There is a singular greatness about us somewhere, or we should not be distinguished by infinite and endless sorrows. Our importance is demonstrated by the length and depth of the shadows that we make. The shouts of conquerors, the sceptres of princes, the triumphs of scientists, the masterpieces of artists, and the scarlet of merchantmen are so many signs of our status. Yet the sense of anxiety, the problems which torture the intellect, our wounded affections, the smart of conscience, our painful sense of limitation and disability, the groan of the afflicted, the burden of living, and the terror of dying are not less signs of our fundamental greatness. The animals suffer, indeed; but we are as sure as we can be sure of anything that they know little of the sadness, suffering, and fear expressed by David, painted by Shakespeare, and known by the most modest of us far better than was expressed by David or painted by Shakespeare. Yes, we are distinguished by our trials, as by our triumphs; our sufferings evince our essential rank as much as our splendours do. The Psalmist boasts: Man is great; he wears the crown of the world, he rules a wide and rich dominion. Yes, responds Job, man is great; he wears the crown of thorns, the royalty of sorrow is his equally with the royalty of strength.

2. It is because of *man's possibilities* that God visits him. For man is not man yet. We are not 'finished and finite clods,' but potentialities. No single individual is a finished article. There is no ready-made human. We are not men yet, but discover here that it is our vocation to become men. The life story of the race has been one of perpetual becoming. The apparently simple word 'man' has never had any constant meaning; it has signified something different in every age of the world. It is being continually packed with new significance, and as much in our own time as in any other. What is man? Ask that question of the primitive cave-dweller. Ask the creature of the Stone Age, the Bronze Age. Ask the negro, the Chinaman, the modern European. Let him be asked who shall inhabit this planet half a million years hence. Each time a different answer must be given. Man means more and more and more. Though his advance be chequered through strife, perplexity, and many a ghastly blunder, the spirit of conquest is within him; he is endowed with a talent which must ultimately surmount every difficulty.

There are degrees of manhood. Socrates was more of a man than the primitive cave-dweller. Individuals and races to-day have not all attained the same stature. One day the super-man will arrive who shall be greater than all who preceded him. Nietzsche was quite right in expecting such a man, right in thinking the universe intends to produce him, though we do not for a moment believe that he will be the 'blonde beast' of that writer's imagination. He will be intellectually, morally and spiritually our superior, though his arrival will depend largely on our own efforts to anticipate him. He will administer his great estate, the earth, with wisdom, and will have learnt the art of peaceful co-operation with his fellows. Said Nietzsche, in words we can echo, 'man is something to be surmounted. What is great in man is that he is a bridge, not a goal. . . . It is time for man to plant the germ of his highest hope. Still is his soil rich enough for it.' Yes, man is full of glorious promise. He is not yet an achievement. He is still but a rudiment. Man, in fact, is an immortal soul, and suffering is one of God's great helpers in the making of a soul.

¶ Millions of human beings but for suffering would never develop an atom of affection. The man who would spare *due* suffering is not wise. It is folly to conclude a thing ought not to be done because it hurts. There are powers to be born, creations to be perfected, sinners to be redeemed through the ministry of pain, that could be born, perfected, redeemed, in no other way.[1]

[1] George MacDonald.

Life is not as idle ore,
But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom
To shape and use.

The Tragedies of Life.

Job vii. 17, 18.—'What is man, that thou shouldest . . . try him every moment?'

Job speaks out of deep affliction; he is puzzled to know why God heaps sorrows on man and makes his life one long trial. How is it that the Almighty should consider a weak mortal sufficiently important to be made the object of so much interest and the subject of such severe correction? What *is* man, that he should be so deeply and constantly subjected to tribulation? Let us attempt an answer to this question.

1. First of all, it surely tends to deliver us from shallow and frivolous conceptions of our own nature. There are many influences at work which tend to give to human nature and life an aspect of littleness. Our very being is itself animal as well as spiritual. We have many needs and cravings in common with the brutes. Our nature, moreover, touches the surrounding world at countless points, many of which are 'pin-points.' Things which are in themselves but trifles have often a wondrous power over us. A poet may be gazing at a beautiful landscape and drinking in its glory; but a speck of dust blown into his eye may for the time spoil the whole for him. Sometimes a passing headache will darken not only the outer but even the inner world. And not only are we thus at the mercy of trivial circumstances, but our very duty summons us to give attention, and often close attention, to the minutest details. An exact description of the ordinary day spent by any one of us—a description recording every single particular from morning till night—would comprise a host of the most petty incidents. Our experience gets so crowded with trivial incidents—our own conduct is so actuated, and that necessarily, by a host of little subsidiary motives, and we are so constantly meeting with others who are also seeking immediate ends which are in themselves but trivial, that there is danger of our life being dwarfed into pettiness, and of our losing a true sense of the inherent dignity of our nature.

Now, precisely here comes in the tragic element of life—to counteract this tendency. For, just as the loftiest mountains throw the largest and deepest shadows, so the dark shadows of human experience bear witness to the original grandeur of our being. You cannot have tragedy without a certain greatness. Thus, even those tragedies of life which are due directly to human sins testify to the greatness of the nature which has been so sadly and shamefully perverted. If a man, in a fit of angry passion, strikes his wife a blow which causes her death, and is thereupon filled with remorse at what he has done, the whole thing acquires its tragic aspect from the human nature which has been thus desecrated. The man who is capable of this remorse was originally capable of self-sacrifice and self-devotion; he who has thus killed his own wife might have been a tender and loving husband. The grandeur of our nature is thus seen even in its ruin. The nobler the ship, and the richer her freight, the more terrible is the spectacle when she strikes upon the rocks. And the very energy with which men dash forward to deeds of violence—the pertinacity with which they pursue schemes of villainy—is often but the misdirected force of a will that is even sublimely strong.

Again, with regard to those terrible calamities which sometimes come into men's experience through no fault of their own, how often is it the case that these ordeals of trial bring to light the noblest traits of character. Is not the Cross of Calvary itself the crowning illustration of how the loftiest greatness of humanity may be revealed against the dark background of the deepest sorrow? What chivalrous courage, what exquisite tenderness, what self-denying patience, are often brought to view in the season of calamity! The captain of a ship who, to look at, is but an

ordinary man, and who, but an hour before, was perhaps laughing and joking with the rest, will, when the crisis comes, go down calmly and quietly with the sinking vessel rather than desert his post of duty. It is in the light of such events as these that we recognize the noble possibilities of our common humanity. There are many scenes in life where we see human beings bustling about little things, and jostling each other in crowds, as they pursue trivial duties or petty pleasures; and we can scarce help asking, Are *these* our immortals? Are *these* the beings who have been made 'only a little lower than the angels'? But if we were to select some one man in that crowd, and see how he comports himself in the presence of some sudden and terrible calamity, then perhaps we should feel disposed rather to exclaim, 'What a piece of work is man! . . . in action, how like an angel; in apprehension, how like a god!'

¶ So that young soldier, Lieutenant William Noel Hodgson, found in the Great War, and so he writes:[1]

Death whining down from Heaven,
Death roaring from the ground,
Death stinking in the nostril,
Death shrill in every sound,
Doubting we charged and conquered—
Hopeless we struck and stood.
Now when the fight is ended
We know that it was good.

We that have seen the strongest
Cry like a beaten child,
The sanest eyes unholy,
The cleanest hands defiled,
We that have known the heart blood
Less than the lees of wine,
We that have seen men broken,
We know man is divine.

2. The tragedies of life confront men directly with the thought of God. Men banish God from their hearts, and try to forget Him in their lives. But God refuses to be forgotten. For our own good, He will, if necessary, simply compel us to recognize His presence. He will make men feel that a higher will than theirs is at work. And, accordingly, we find that even those who perhaps never pray to God are forced at times to recognize His providence, and to ponder the mystery of its working. So long as things are going on smoothly and prosperously, yea, so long as even affliction is pursuing an ordinary and familiar course, there are many who succeed in keeping God out of 'all their thoughts.' But when there comes some sudden and extraordinary visitation they are aroused to reflection. The appalling magnitude of the calamity startles them. The very fact that some event presents an inscrutable mystery awakens them to the sense of an Infinite Wisdom overruling the projects and the actions of mankind. And, if the calamity has come nearer, and touched the circle of their own friendship or acquaintance, then the sense of the Divine Presence is brought nearer still. They are not atheists; but perhaps they have been neglecting and forsaking God. The Almighty One, who has thus so terribly visited and tried their neighbour, may one day similarly visit and try them.

We are all of us living, every day, on the verge of *possible* tragedy. Our life is not in our own keeping, but in the hands of One who often 'moves in a mysterious way.' When we hear of other human beings, many of them better men and women than ourselves, suffering from unexpected calamities, can we help thinking that perhaps our time also may come? God will not be shut out from our thoughts. For our own sake, He will be recognized. And when we think of the terrible possibilities of our own future, dare we go forth into that future without God? Dare we dash forward recklessly or frivolously, without asking Him to guard and guide us, to give us faith for every trial, and strength for every emergency?

When our way slips beneath us to the dark,
And we've no words with which for light to plead,
Help us to wait, and for Thy love to hark—
Be very near us, Saviour, in our need.

We know no other hope than Thou canst give,
No other love that is with victory crown'd,

[1] In Osborn's *New Elizabethans*, 263.

No other strength that helps our souls to live,
No pity like Thine own to fold us round.

Blind, we but turn our shadowed eyes to Thee;
Dumb, we but stretch for Thine our helpless hands,
Take us, and make us what we ought to be,
And bind our broken pride in Love's sweet bands.

Till all our weakness in Thy grace grows strong,
And in Thy footprints move our stumbling feet,
And Thy love leads us, though the night be long,
Where dawn and darkness in Love's fulness meet.[1]

3. This same tragic element in life tends to deepen our reverence and tenderness towards our fellow-men. We are all more or less prone to become selfishly absorbed in our own affairs, and to grow apathetic and indifferent towards those of others. Our experience of the world sometimes tends to make us hard and cold and censorious. Even our own troubles do not always deepen the springs of our charity: we may shut ourselves up in our griefs, and morbidly exaggerate our trials, until we become morose and peevish instead of sympathetic and gentle. But here, too, comes in the tragedy of life to counteract this selfish tendency. Ever and again there occurs some terrible event involving others in a sorrow which dwarfs our own griefs. It is scarcely in human nature to remain apathetic in the presence of such catastrophes. A great calamity invests even the meanest with interest. It tends to draw us out of ourselves, and to open the floodgates of sympathy and benevolence. Surely the fact that we are all of us living together in a world of such possibilities may well tend to disarm our harshness. 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones'; for, little though he be, he may yet have to pass through great trials. That man, whom you never saw before, and whom you may never see again, whom you are judging so hastily, and to whom, on slight provocation, you are speaking so harshly—ah! could you only read the drama of his life, it might be that your whole heart within you would be melted into forbearance and compassion.

[1] Lauchlan MacLean Watt.

Oh who are these with pale and stricken faces
That throng about the portals of my heart?
I have no help to give—no fair wide spaces,
Narrow and cold my heart: therefore depart.

My ears are closed against your plea unspoken,
I will not turn mine eyes upon your pain.
Go from me—take your lives all marred and broken
Far from my hardened heart—turn you again.

What! Still you press about me, silent standing,
Mournful—insistent—will not be denied?
Look then, I open wide to your demanding
The chambers dim where heart and soul reside.

You still would enter? all undaunted thronging
These narrow precincts? do not straight depart?
Oh, sorrowful, and stricken with earth's wronging,
Enter and pardon. God enlarge my heart![1]

[1] Margaret Blaikie, *Songs by the Way*, 50.

The Papyrus Plant.

Job viii. 11.—'Can the rush grow up without mire?'

Bildad, who said these words, was a very polite man. He professed to be a friend of Job, but was convinced in his own mind, notwithstanding his friend's high reputation for goodness, that he was guilty of some secret crime or vice which brought down upon him the punishment of God. Job could not, as he

thought, have been such a great sufferer unless he had been a great sinner. But Bildad could not bring himself to tell him that to his face in plain words. He therefore took refuge in the common custom of his people, and brought his charge against Job in a roundabout fashion, in the form of a proverb or figure of speech in which his own opinion was supported by higher authority.

The rush to which he refers did not grow in the dry and parched land of Uz, which was the place where Bildad and Job lived. It grew principally in Egypt, and in one or two places in Northern Palestine. It is no other than the famous bulrush of the Nile, of which the ark was made in which the infant Moses was concealed. The smooth rind or skin of this remarkable plant, which once grew in great abundance in Egypt but is now very scarce, supplied, when dried and beaten out and pasted together, the first material used for writing upon. Our word paper comes from its name, 'papyrus.'

Every plant needs water. But while other plants need water and are dependent upon it, they can nevertheless cling to life and preserve their greenness during a pretty long drought. The rush, on the contrary, cannot exist without water even for the shortest period; and the burning sun of Egypt would destroy in a few hours every water-plant that grows in the Nile were the stream to fail and cease to bathe its roots. Bildad tells us this in very striking language. He says: 'While it is yet in its greenness and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb.' That is to say, while other plants wither slowly and require to be cut down before they dry up, and even then retain their greenness a long time, the rush shrinks up at once when it is quite fresh and uninjured, if the nourishing water be withdrawn from it, and it be left exposed to the scorching sun. No other plant so quickly withers in the absence of water, just because it is made to grow in the water. All its structure is adapted to that kind of situation and to no other. Its material is soft and spongy and filled with water, which evaporates at once when the circulation is not kept up.

Now the moral which Bildad draws from that interesting fact of natural history is that as the rush requires water for its life so man can live only by the favour of God. It is the same truth that is conveyed in very similar words in the 17th chapter of Jeremiah, where the prophet says, 'Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.' This striking image Bildad applied to Job. He insinuated that his afflicted friend was like the rush that had been forsaken by its nourishing waters, and had therefore withered away. He had forgotten God, therefore his paths were not prosperous. He was a hypocrite, and therefore his hope had perished. We all know how false this accusation was; how upright and truly God-fearing Job was, and how, therefore, his misfortunes were chastisements of love and not judgments of wrath, proofs of God's grievous, though gracious dealing with him to make him a nobler man, not punishments for some secret sin or habitual transgression. But from Bildad's point of view there seemed no other explanation of Job's terrible trials than that he had sinned greatly against God in some way or other, and that he was reaping in these sore trials the fruits of his own evil doings.

Now, what we require for our spiritual well-being is that we should grow beside the well of water that springeth up into everlasting life. Jesus can be to us rivers of water in a dry place. Quickened and refreshed by this living element in which we are rooted, we can defy the drought of evil circumstances, and turn all hostile things to blessed uses. Because all our well-springs are in God, and the sources of our human steadfastness and hope are in heaven, we can flourish in the withering atmosphere of the world, and endure the fiery trials of life. We are independent of the precarious supplies of the world. The things of the world that would otherwise be against us will work together for our good.

God promised by the mouth of the prophet

Isaiah, 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses.' What were those willows that loved the water and could not do without it? They were not the dull grey-green trees that we know by that name, and that are so familiar to us beside our native streams. They were the fair oleanders or rose-willows, with long willow-like leaves, and lovely large crimson flowers like roses. The banks of the Jordan, the course of every stream in the rainy season, and the shores of the Sea of Galilee, are fringed with the brilliant pink bloom of this splendid plant. The Jews hung their harps upon the real weeping-willows of Babylon, and thought upon those lovely rose-willows of their native land; just as the exile in India or Africa might dream with longing desires of the daisy-fields and primrose-woods of England. Thus, it is not a mere rush of a dull uniform greenness, relieved only by the brown rusty tassel of a blossom at its top, with no brightness or beauty about it, that God wishes us to grow up into beside the water-courses of His grace. He wishes us to be as oleanders or rose-willows, putting forth brilliant crimson blossoms, making a perfect garden in the wilderness, and attracting every eye by the beauty of our religion.

¶ The only kind of goodness that does much good in the world is of the joyful sort. Many people have a depressing way of approaching duty. 'Ought I?' they say. They drag themselves to it like Shakespeare's

> . . . . whining school-boy, with his satchel
> And shining morning face, creeping like
> snail
> Unwillingly to school.

But there are others who come with another question, 'May I?' They clear the air like a north-west wind, making it bracing and buoyant. Right living, as they see it, is an invitation extended, a privilege offered, a boon conferred. They are like Doctor Bushnell, concerning whom it was said that 'even his dying was play to him.' They alone commend goodness to the world, for most people choose goodness, if they choose it at all, for the same reason that Tolstoy became a Christian: 'I saw around me people who, having this faith, derived from it an idea of life that gave them strength to live and strength to die in peace and in joy.'[1]

A Daysman.

Job ix. 33.—'Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.'

At this point of the poem we are seeing Job at his worst. He has become desperate under his accumulated miseries. His three friends, instead of giving him the sympathy and tenderness that his wretchedness craves, take the attitude of mentors, mete out to him reproach instead of comfort, and, assuming that his trouble is God's visitation for some secret sin, ply him with appeals to humble himself and repent. Conscious that he has hitherto served God faithfully, Job indignantly denies and fights this cool assumption of his guilt; but, in fighting away from this, he is pushed back upon another question, which takes on larger and larger proportions as he confronts it: 'If I am not afflicted because of my guilt, as I refuse to believe, why *am* I afflicted?'

As we push our way towards the storm-centre of this whirlwind of passion we find that it is not utterly chaotic. At first feebly, vaguely, timidly, certain lines strike out, becoming more firmly drawn and more definite in direction as the poem unfolds. Certain deep-lying instincts begin to take shape in cravings for something which the theology of the day does not supply. The sufferer begins to feel, rather than see, that the problem of his affliction needs for its solution the additional factor which was supplied long after in the person and work of Jesus Christ—a mediator between God and man.

It is wonderful, it is most pathetic, this bitter, pitiful wail wrung from a tortured heart in those far-off times, this cry for that better thing which is so familiar to us, and

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 78.

which we owe to the gospel of the Son of God —a mediator who lays his hand on both God and man.

And this leads us to observe that this desire of Job's is to be studied, not merely as the experience of an individual under peculiar circumstances, but as a *human* experience, the germs of which are in man as man; in other words, Job's craving for a mediator is the craving of humanity. Natural instincts, indeed, are not infallible guides; but they are truthful suggesters. In the material world it is a familiar enough fact that the indication of a want is the indication of a supply somewhere. Supply and demand answer to each other. The channels which run up the trunk of a tree are infallible signs of the tree's need of moisture, and are answered by the streams which run among the hills. A bird's wing implies air; the human tongue, palate and stomach imply food: the ear is nothing without sound, nor the eye without light. Shall we say that this law ceases to hold from the moment we quit the material world? 'Nature,' says one, 'is true up to the heart of man: shall Nature suddenly become a false prophet then?' The cravings of the human heart for love, for sympathy, for masterdom, for an object of worship, for knowledge—do not these declare that the heart was made for such, and that somewhere in the scheme of things there are answers and supplies for these needs? If not, might we not well ask with the Psalmist, 'Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?' Not a demonstration, indeed; but does not the groping of the human soul in all ages and places for a God, at least suggest that the soul was made for God? Does it not more than hint at the existence of a Being to meet these outstretched hands, and take them tenderly into His own?

Why is Christ called the 'desire of all nations?' The need of Christ is not an artificial need, created by conditions of knowledge and civilization: it is a need embedded in the very structure of humanity. Christ meets an *existing* need. Manhood was made for Christ. When antiquarians, digging in the ruins of some old city, come upon the half of a beautiful statue, they are at once stimulated to search for the other half. There are limbs and feet and a body, which want a head and shoulders to complete them. When these are found, it is evident enough that the two parts belong together; so, when Christ comes, it is evident enough that there is a vacant place which is was meant He alone should fill. He was meant for humanity; but, equally, humanity was meant for Him. And with Christ goes this fact of mediation. Mediation is not a dogma of theologians merely. It is not an invention. It is not an ingenious contrivance to get round or over the two tremendous facts of a holy God and a sinful humanity. It meets a human need and a human craving just as truly as Christ Himself does. There is a place for mediation in man's relations to God. There is a craving for mediation in the human heart, to which Job here gives voice.

1. The craving for a mediator is awakened by *weakness*. Here am I, weak and erring by nature, compassed about by all sorts of temptations, my mind held down to earth by the necessity of earning my own bread and my children's. I am overworked, overstrained, often sick, irritable, petulant; and I make, at best, but a bungling business of a spiritual life. I might urge these things in extenuation of my case if God were a man as I am; but how can I expect Him, a Being so infinitely superior, seated on the inaccessible heights of this pure heaven, with a nature to which sin cannot appeal—how can I expect Him to concern Himself with these toils and hindrances and burdens of mine?' Thank God! I can say to such an one, 'He *is* a man.' I point him to God manifest in the flesh. Between God's pure spiritual essence and us stands Christ, tempted and tried like as we are: an High Priest enrolled among men, and, as a man, able to 'have compassion upon the ignorant, and upon them that are out of the way.' He knows by actual contact the power and seductiveness of evil; He knows by actual experience the hardest and most heavily weighted side of life: and He is touched, not only with the knowledge, but with the *feeling*, of our infirmities. No depth of sorrow so

low that He has not been down there; no road so rugged or thorny that He has not walked every step of it; no agony of pain so intense that He has not been racked by it. And so, as we come to God by Him, we learn that our Judge is also our Sympathizer. In coming to God, 'the Judge of all,' we find that we come to 'Jesus, the Mediator, the Daysman of a new covenant.'

¶ Some months ago I came across a story how once the novelist, George Gissing, found a child in a lonely spot by a woodland, sobbing his heart away. He was leaning against a tree-trunk, his head buried in his arms. He must have been crying for a long time, for every muscle in his face quivered and his limbs shook. He had been sent with sixpence to pay a debt, and he had lost the money. It was not so much the fear of facing his parents as utter misery at the thought of the harm he had done them that made the tears flow so bitterly.

'Sixpence dropped by the wayside, and a whole family made wretched! I put my hand in my pocket and wrought sixpennyworth of miracle.' Such was the novelist's own account of the event.

This morning, however, my reading has taken me behind the scenes of George Gissing's life as told in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, and with something of a shock I have realized how little I understood the inwardness of the story; for I have learnt something more about the sixpences of George Gissing.

In an alley on the west side of Tottenham Court Road the novelist once lived in a back bedroom on the top floor. But after a period he removed to the front cellar of the same building. The cellar had a stone floor; the furniture consisted of a table, a chair, a washstand and a bed. The window, of course, had never been cleaned since it had been put in; and it received light through a flat grating in the alley above. On the filthy deal table, on which lay his Homer and his Shakespeare, the novelist plied his craft. Why did George Gissing change his top-back-room for the cellar? Because it made a difference of sixpence a week in the rent, and sixpence meant *two meals*. A sixpence to George Gissing was very near to the issues of life and death.

Once he came upon a book which he coveted, a copy of Tibullus. He bought it. It cost him sixpence, and for that extravagance he had to live on bread and butter for twenty-four hours. The sixpence which would have bought him a plate of meat and vegetables at a coffee-shop in Oxford Street he had squandered in gratifying another appetite. But before the purchase was made he paced the pavement, fingering the coppers in his pocket, and eyeing the stall, while two cravings did combat within him. In his hands a sixpence had almost a sacramental meaning—sixpence for a copy of Tibullus and short rations as the penalty!

One day he found sixpence in the street! Let me give you his words. Writing long afterwards about this treasure-trove, he said, 'I had an exaltation which is vivid to me at this moment.' A memorable exaltation about a sixpence!

And now, with this knowledge of the man, let us look again at the story of the child and the lost sixpence. It was such a man who put his hand in his pocket and wrought sixpennyworth of miracle. He who had such an exaltation at a sixpence found could conceive what anguish followed a sixpence lost. The man who changed his lodgings for a cellar to save sixpence a week, who fasted in order that he might buy a Tibullus for sixpence—he understood what it all meant when he saw the child shedding hopeless tears over his lost treasure.

Gissing was able to be a real champion to the impoverished boy just because of the grim knowledge of human struggle that had been his own lot. The child might have shrunk in tongue-tied shyness from a man, however kindly, who had lived only in the lap of luxury; but with Gissing, who himself had known the travail of lost sixpences, there was swift and complete rapport. His own experience gave him the access of sympathy into the very heart of the boy's sorrowing confidence.

As I thought over these things I reached for my Bible and turned to the Epistle to the Hebrews; and words there seemed to shine with a new and deepened meaning: 'We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with

the feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tried as we are.'

The tragedies of our lost sixpences are understood in all their poignancy just because He who bore this robe of flesh and entered into all our human trials, from the vantage-ground of that experience, can be our real succour in times of need.[1]

2. The craving for a mediator is awakened by *sin*. For clean I am not, and never can be, in God's sight. Moral perfection in Him I may admire from a distance, as I would some glittering snow-peak of the Caucasus; but it is a different matter when I come to climb, and try to find a refuge for my frailty in, that perfect beauty of holiness. Sinful as I am, how can I hope that He will forgive? What can I bring to win His grace? 'Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?' Nay, 'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' What, indeed! Is this a slight requirement? Truly, to fill it out were even harder than to bring the thousands of victims. To do justly, love mercy, walk humbly—that may seem to some an easy thing; but, when a man has once caught sight of God's holiness, as Job had, and has learned God's ideal of justice, mercy, and humility, he is not unlikely to reach Job's conclusion. What shall I do, then? How shall I bear His hand upon me? Even while I ask, it *is* upon me; and lo! it is a pierced hand, scored with the mark of the nail; and I hear a voice: 'What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.' Thus I learn that this terrible, holy God so loves and cares for me that He is anxious to forgive me—so anxious that He becomes a Man in order that I may see Divine, forgiving love translated into human lineaments and human deeds and human words. Christ says to me, 'I offered this life because of your sins. This hand upon you is God's hand; and the voice which speaks to you is God's voice, saying, 'If you confess your sins, he is faithful and *just*.' Mark that. Not one jot of that awful justice abated; yet still *faithful* to forgive your sins, and 'to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.'

¶ For about a fortnight I was in great anxiety of soul; but on Monday, February 20, I was reading in my room, alone, at Swalland, the verse, *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* I said to God, 'Lord, I cannot see this. If it were written, "Thou art gracious and merciful to forgive," I could understand it; but how canst Thou be *faithful and just* to forgive? *Faithful* to whom? *Just* to whom? Now, Lord, show me.' I was longing for life and peace. Well, before I rose from my knees, the whole thing was made clear to me. I saw that there was a covenant not between God and man, but between God and Christ; and, if I was among those who confessed their sins, I was in the agreement, and then he was *faithful* to the Son, and *just*, to the promise made to the Son, to forgive me then and there. I saw, at once, that I had pardon; and peace came into my soul.[1]

3. Again, this craving for a mediator is awakened by human experience of *suffering*—a fact which is intertwined with the fact of sin. This poor, tortured patriarch! Truly, from the Christian standpoint, he is one of the most pathetic spectacles in all history: no knowledge, no dream, of Christ; no hint of such knowledge of God as is possible only through Christ; no hint of Divine sympathy or of loving purpose in affliction. Take up your own bitterest sorrow, and go back with it to the ash-heap on which Job sits, and put yourself as far as possible in his place. Shut out the view of the Christ on whose pierced hand you have dropped your tears, while you have leaned against His heart, and heard Him whisper the higher lesson of sorrow—and will you wonder that Job broke out into pas-

[1] Kennedy Williamson.

[1] *Evan Henry Hopkins*, 28.

sionate despair? Will you wonder that his heart cried out for just that which has been so ineffably precious to you? Take his view of God as his own magnificent words describe Him—overturning the mountains, and sealing the stars, and striding upon the heights of the sea, and bringing this tremendous energy to bear in afflicting a poor, weak son of man—and do you wonder that he cried out for someone to stand between him and that awful power and holiness? Ah! there was no one to stand by Job, and say, 'Look on me. I am purer than thou art, yea, spotless and sinless as God Himself; yet it pleased the Lord to bruise me. Behold my hands and my feet. Thrust thy hand into my side. Sit down here, and let me tell thee of Gethsemane and Calvary, of agony such as even you never endured. You cannot understand this. You are shut up within the narrow conception of affliction as punishment and retribution. I can show you, by my life and character, how suffering ministers to perfection. I can show you how, on that hard soil watered with tears, grew up the manhood which is the world's pattern, the world's hope, and the eternal joy and glory of heaven.' Christ steps forth from the darkness which veils Calvary, and says to the great host of the suffering, 'Here is suffering which is not retribution, suffering which is not the outpouring of Divine wrath, suffering ministered by perfect love, and issuing in power and purity.' We need, our poor humanity needs, such a Daysman, partaker of both natures, the Divine and the human, to show us suffering on its heavenly as well as on its earthly side, and to flood its earthly side with heavenly light by the revelation. The transfigured and the crucified Christ—Christ who had not where to lay His head, and Christ to Whom every knee shall bow—are one and the same. Suffering and glory blend in Him into greater glory, and through Him God's suffering servant learns that He suffers with him that they may be glorified together. In Him we have the human experience of sorrow and its Divine interpretation.[1]

Up Thy Hill of Sorrows
Thou all alone,
Jesus, man's Redeemer,
Climbing to a Throne:
Thro' the world triumphant,
Thro' the Church in pain,
Which think to look upon Thee
No more again.

Upon my hill of sorrows
I, Lord, with Thee,
Cheered, upheld, yea carried
If a need should be:
Cheered, upheld, yea carried
Never alone,
Carried in Thy heart of hearts
To a Throne.[1]

[1] M. R. Vincent, *God and Bread*, 265ff.

The Uses of Adversity.

Job x. 2.—'Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.'

THE utter unexpectedness of many life-sorrows is one of their strangest characteristics. They come like a thunder-bolt out of a clear sky, not only without any premonition of their coming, but without any apparent reason for it; and the crushed heart asks, either angrily or despairingly, why they have been sent. Many a sufferer besides Job has turned his face to heaven in amazed perplexity, and prayed 'Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me,' and, when no answer to that cry has come, has either looked upon the whole thing as an insoluble mystery, or coldly and half-rebelliously resigned himself to the worship of another god altogether, whom he calls 'inevitable fate.'

But surely we are often entirely wrong in talking of the 'mysteriousness' of God's dealings with us. We may not know *all* His reasons for them, but *some* of His reasons are plain enough.

1. Suffering is often God's hard but salutary restraint laid upon a wilful life that is ruining itself. If we choose to live as the beasts that perish, God will deal with us as with beasts; the cold hard bit will be thrust between the teeth, and the lash will not be spared.

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

And yet that sore check given to a wayward soul may be the beginning of its salvation. 'Oppression,' says the preacher-king, 'will make a wise man mad'; but a greater Preacher by far has shown, in His exquisite parable of the Prodigal Son, how suffering can make a madman wise. It was just when the sorrows he had brought upon himself by his self-indulgent reckless life were at their worst that the prodigal 'came to himself,' turned over a new leaf, and said to himself 'I will arise, and go to my father.' And soon thereafter he wept out his shame and penitence upon his father's breast.

But it is not the utterly reckless alone who need the bridle and the bit. Even those who are in the main God-fearing often go foolishly very far astray, and need sharp reminders of their folly to bring them back. What a hard 'bit' the Lord had to put into the mouth of Lot to rescue him from what would have been death to his soul! Nothing less than a fiery destruction of his foolishly-chosen home and of all his wealth would do. What a terrible 'whip' of retribution did David feel when the child of his sin lay dead before his weeping eyes, and when one after another of his house brought shame and misery into his declining years! What a sharp lesson of the folly of worldly ambition was taught to Jehoshaphat after his sinful alliance with the wicked Amaziah, when a furious tempest wrecked the ships he had built to go to Ophir for gold, and they lay broken in pieces at Eziongeber!

2. Suffering is often God's loud call to repentance. It is a prophet speaking in God's name, but one of those prophets whom we must go out into the wilderness to hear: and He who loves us better than we think may lead us into a wilderness of shattered ambitions just to get us to listen to that voice which the noise of the world drowns, the voice which says 'Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.' Joab, in his insolent defiance, refused to go to Absalom, though message after message was sent, till Absalom 'set his barley-field on fire,' and then he came quickly enough! Alas for us if God has sometimes to burn up our comforts of every kind before He can get us to listen to Him!

3. There is often no other way left of saving us from self-destruction. 'I spake unto thee in thy prosperity,' He says, 'and thou saidst I will not hear.' 'Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God'; but be sure of this, that He never resorts to severity till His goodness has failed to win any response. Severity is the last resource of love; and so, severity is goodness after all. All who in this way have been won back to God will praise Him for the severity ere all is done. Hezekiah was only expressing the feelings of all God's chastened children when he said, 'O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit.' Behold, it was for my peace that I had great bitterness.

Does not this explain much of the sorrow through which even Christian hearts have sometimes to pass? They know that there is no blessing worth anything except the blessing of God. They would feel their souls utterly darkened if He should take away from them the light of His countenance. They honestly ask to be filled with the peace which that shining alone can give. But then, they are not willing to risk much for the sake of getting it. In all the habits and plans and ambitions of daily life they have one eye upon God and the other eye upon the world. They love their earthly comforts and luxuries and pleasures so much that, almost unconsciously, these things fill up the largest part of their horizon, and God's glory is put far too much out of view. They are not indifferent to His glory; but there is a great dead-weight of worldliness pressing them down, and there is a great world-love that must be taken out of them before they can have the full enjoyment of His peace. The Lord sees that the only way in which that world-love can be killed is the way of some bitter discipline of pain: and so bad health comes, some prostrating sickness interrupting all their worldly activities comes, bereavement comes, making the world look poor, a sudden crash of fortune comes, they are driven out of their paradise into a wilderness of sand. And there the fool-

ish pursuit of worldly good, a pursuit that bade fair to ruin them, is stopped; a merciful Hand destroys their 'happiness' to give them 'peace,' which is a wholly different and infinitely better thing; for it is only when the heart is empty enough to receive it that this peace comes in.

That is a striking sentence in the 99th Psalm: 'Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions.' There are the 'goodness' and the 'severity' going hand in hand. The goodness is for us, the severity is for the sins and follies which we have enshrined beside God, or even instead of God, in the temple of our lives. How many a life, seen as He sees it, is really one long enthronement of self and dethronement of Him! We will give Him our worship, but will not let Him rule absolutely over us as King. Indeed it sometimes looks as if we were trying to find out how much sinful self-will God will endure in us without striking us down! He is ever seeking to spare us, but if we will still go on in our self-chosen way, we not only *provoke* Him to smite, we *compel* Him to do it—compel Him, unless all righteousness is to be cast down ashamed, and sin is to be the unchallenged ruler of the world. But if we thus challenge God to combat, by building for ourselves houses of pride into which no entry is to be given to Him, is it any wonder that, through His accepting the challenge, the earth is full of wailing, and that life everywhere is marked by lonely breadths of utter desolation?

Better a thousand times to suffer the sharpest sorrows here, if they do but lead to repentant faith, and so to heaven at last.[1]

Fair visions gleaming through the darkness beckoned
My buoyant steps along the sunny way;
Sweet voices thrilled me, till I fondly reckoned
That life would be one long blue summer day.

This was the way my feet had gladly taken,
And, blindly lured by that deceitful gleam,
I would have wandered on, by God forsaken,
Till death awoke me from my fatal dream.

My pleasant path in sudden darkness ended,
My footsteps slipped, my hope was well-nigh gone;
I could but pray; and as my prayer ascended,
Thy face, O Saviour, through the darkness shone.

I woke from dreams; and, cured of all my blindness,
I saw Thy Hand had checked my downward way:
The pain was keen, but all in loving kindness,
That led me out of darkness into Day.[1]

[1] G. H. Knight, *In the Cloudy and Dark Day*, 11ff.

Talkativeness.

Job xi. 2.—'Should a man full of talk be justified?'

With many men and many women great talkativeness is a matter of simple temperament and mental constitution. And a talkative habit would be a childlike and an innocent habit if the heart of the talker and the hearts of those to whom he talks so much were full only of truth and love. But, our hearts and our neighbours' hearts being what they are, in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin. So much of our talk is about our absent neighbours, and there are so many misunderstandings, prejudices, ambitions, competitions, oppositions, and all kinds of cross-interests between us and our absent neighbours that we cannot long talk about them till our hearts have run our tongues into all manner of trespass.

1. Take *detraction* for an example, one of the commonest and, surely, one of the most detestable of the sins of the tongue. And the etymology here, as in this whole region, is most instructive and most impressive. In detraction you *draw away* something from your neighbour that is most precious and most dear to him. In detraction you are a thief, and a thief of the falsest and wickedest kind. For your neighbour's purse is trash, while his

[1] J. D. Burns.

good name is far more precious to him than all his gold. Someone praises your neighbour in your hearing, his talents, his performances, his character, his motives, or something else that belongs to your neighbour. Someone does that in your hearing who either does not know you, or who wishes to torture and expose you, and you fall straight into the snare thus set for you, and begin at once to belittle, depreciate, detract from, and run down your neighbour, who has been too much praised for your peace of mind and your self-control. You insinuate something to his disadvantage and dishonour. You quote some authority you have heard to his hurt. And so on, past all our power to picture you. For detraction has a thousand devices, taught to it by the master of all such devices, wherewith to drag down and defile the great and the good. But, with all you can say or do, you cannot for many days get out of your mind the heart-poisoning praise you heard spoken of your envied neighbour.

2. *Backbiting,* again, would seem at first sight to be a sin of the teeth rather than of the tongue, only, no sharpest tooth can tear you when your back is turned like your neighbour's evil tongue. Pascal has many dreadful things about the corruption and misery of men, but he has nothing that strikes its terrible barb deeper into all our consciences than this, that if all our friends only knew what we have said about them behind their back, we would not have four friends in all the world.

3. '*Giving of characters*' also takes up a large part of our everyday conversation. We cannot well help characterizing, describing, and estimating one another. But, as far as possible, when we see the conversation again approaching that dangerous subject, we should call to mind our past remorse; we should suppose our absent neighbour present; we should imagine him in our place and ourselves in his place, and so turn the rising talk into another channel. For, the truth is, few of us are able to do justice to our neighbour when we begin to discuss and describe him. Generosity in our talk is far easier for us than justice. It was this incessant giving of characters that our Lord had in His eye when He said in His Sermon on the Mount: Judge not. But our Lord might as well never have uttered that warning word for all the attention we give it. For we go on judging one another and sentencing one another as if we were entirely and in all things blameless ourselves, and as if God had set us up in our blamelessness in His seat of judgment over all our fellows. How seldom do we hear anyone say in a public debate or in a private conversation, I don't know; or, It is no matter of mine; or, I feel that I am not in possession of all the facts; or, It may be so, but I must not judge. We never hear such things as these said. No one pays the least attention to the Preacher on the Mount. And if anyone says to us, I must not judge, we never forgive him, because his humility and his obedience so condemn all our ill-formed, prejudiced, rash, and ill-natured judgments of our neighbour.

4. But then there is *the talker,* the man who does no ill to his neighbour except waste his time, the man who does nothing in fact but just talk. This is Bunyan's Talkative. Talkative, as Bunyan so scornfully names that tall man, though he undoubtedly takes up too much time and too much space in Bunyan's book, was not a busybody in other men's matters at any rate. Nobody could call him a detractor or a backbiter or a talebearer or a liar. Christian knew him well, and had known him long, but Christian was not afraid to leave him alone with Faithful. We all know men we feel it unsafe to leave long alone with our friends. We feel sure that they will be talking about us, and that to our hurt, as soon as our backs are about. But to give that tall man his due, he was not given, with all his talk, to talebearing or scandal or detraction. Had he been guilty of any of these things, Faithful would soon have found him out, and would have left him to go to the Celestial City by himself. But after talking for half a day with Talkative, instead of finding out anything wrong in the tall man's talk, Faithful was so taken and so struck with it, that he stepped across to Christian and said, 'What a brave companion we

have got! Surely this man will make a most excellent pilgrim!' 'So I once thought too,' said Christian, 'till I went to live beside him, and have to do with him in the business of daily life.' Yes, it is near neighbourhood and the business of everyday life that try a talkative man. If you go to a meeting for prayer, and hear some men praying and speaking on religious subjects, you would say to yourself, What a good man that is, and how happy must his wife and children and servants and neighbours be with such an example always before them, and with such an intercessor for them always with God! But if you were to go home with that so devotional man, and try to do business with him, and were compelled to cross him and go against him, you would find out why Christian smiled so when Faithful was so full of Talkative's praises.[1]

¶ Talkative is drawn from life, and some long-haired and leather-jerkined man talks again in him after the silence of two hundred years in an unknown grave. It is characteristic of the fidelity of Bunyan that he has drawn this portrait. He is no partisan who is afraid of a truth, even against his own side, any more than the frank writers of the Bible are, who have told the stories of Jacob and of Peter. Here is a Puritan writing of what he knows. He has seen the evil excesses of some of the prophets, lunatic preachers, and loquacious hypocrites of his day, and he exposes it ruthlessly. The whole picture is a protest that this is not the true type of Puritan, and he has sent it down for the benefit of those who in every age are tempted to a religion of speech instead of deed.

The permanent warning of this passage is that fluency is always a dangerous gift. . . . Dr. Whyte has told a story of a Carthusian, which Browning tells in another form in his *Pambo*. It is the tale of a young man going to a teacher, whose first word to him was, 'I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.' The student broke off the lesson, and found that enough for a lifetime. It is not so much particular sins such as profanity, or foulness, or backbiting that are here rebuked, but simple excess of language. He who talks too much is sure to exaggerate his experience, and to use words without meanings. In this way the blight of unreality comes across the whole field of conversation. Speech ceases to be expressive or persuasive; and, worst of all, it becomes a substitute for the very things about which it discourses. . . . . .

As the intercourse goes on, we witness the general collapse of this man's character. He is one of the multitude to whom the pithy saying of a northern Scot applies—'we're war tae please wi' preaching nor we are wi' practising.'[1]

[1] A. Whyte, *Bunyan Characters*, i. 181ff.

Finding God.

Job xi. 7.—'Canst thou by searching find out God?'

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.[2]

There is nothing like the Book of Job, in the Bible or out of it,—nothing so thorough, so searching, so plain-spoken, so audacious—nothing that gives so free a rein to sincere speculation. The man who wrote it knew nothing of the interests that engross our modern life—law, commerce, medicine, science, the art of government, international polity—but his book is as fresh to-day as when he penned it two thousand five hundred years ago. And twenty-five centuries hence, when the historians of Rome and the philosophers of Greece have been quite dethroned, it has been anticipated that 'it will be seen towering up alone, far away above all the poetry of the world.' The reason is that it deals with the awful issues which have swept over the human mind through all generations—man, good, evil, happiness, suffering, life, death, hope, destiny, time, eternity, above all, because including all, God. The dominating feature of this Book

[1] John Kelman, *The Road*, i. 181, 182, 190.
[2] Phillips Brooks.

is the truth of the existence of God. Job takes it for granted. He will not stop to argue about it. God is—for him that is not a postulate to be conceded but an axiom, unquestioned and unquestionable. What upsets and agonizes and shatters him is how to reconcile God with what He does and what He does not do, with what He permits and with what He does not prevent.

The words of the text are taken from the speech of Zophar, one of Job's friends. His contention is that Job is assuming himself to be innocent, simply because he is judging himself by the light of his own standards, forgetting that in the mind of God there must exist a purity, truth and righteousness before which all human action must seem unclean, insincere and unjust. The author probably does not mean us to accept this as a solution of the problem, but in his dramatic intensity the words take a wider meaning than their particular reference and reveal a thought that evidently was at work in his own mind, namely, that, after all, there must remain something in the ways of God that will be for ever inscrutable to the mind of man. We find this idea appearing in the words of Job: 'Oh, that I knew where I might find him.' Through the whole work runs the thought that God's ways are above our ways; that only in the light of perfect knowledge can they be vindicated; and that what remains for man to do is to trust that in the end all shall be clear and right.

We must take God as He is, or have nothing to do with Him; we must deny Him utterly or believe Him absolutely. It was said by a great French scientist of the last generation—M. Pasteur—that any doubt about the immortality of the soul came into his mind only when he began to argue out the question in a way to satisfy his own exacting intellect. Is not that within our own experience with regard to other religious conceptions—with regard, above all, to this rudimentary question of the being of God? Once grant the crude, primary, basal idea of the 'omnipresence of something that passes comprehension,' and the most inexorable logic compels us to go further. It was another man of science—the late Lord Kelvin—who declared, not long before he died, that, though we knew God only in His works, we were forced by science to admit and believe with absolute confidence in a directive power, in an influence other than physical, dynamical, electrical forces. It was another Frenchman, not a Christian, who spoke of the 'one thing' which 'alone is certain—the Fatherly smile which now and then gleams through Nature, bearing witness that an Eye looks down upon us, that a Heart follows us.'

¶ When Napoleon was returning from the expedition in Egypt, a group of his officers one evening entered into a discussion concerning the existence of a God. They were on the deck of a vessel in the Mediterranean Sea. Their conversation was leading to the conclusion that there was no God when somebody proposed to ask the opinion of Napoleon, who was standing apart, wrapped in thought. On hearing the question—Is there a God?—he raised his hand and, pointing to the starry sky, simply replied, 'Gentlemen, who made all that?'[1]

But what do we think of God? Just as the Bible shows a progressive revelation from the Deity of the early chapters of Genesis to the Father of the Lord's Prayer, who, like the sun in the heavens, 'lights and warms the broad field of human life,' so is it and has it been with ourselves. There was the conception which possessed us in our childhood—a distant God, but a God who cared, though a God to be appeased. Some sense of a more human and reasonable God came to us with youth and dawning manhood. Then, 'God the strengthener, the setter of great tasks, who asks great sacrifices and gives great rewards,' appealed to us in the hey-day of our vigour and maturity. After that comes 'the God of repair, the God of consolation, the God who takes men's broken lives into His hands and mends them,' as in the afternoon of our days we brood over our unexpected bereavements and defeated aspirations. Last of all there is the God with whom we are prepared to leave everything, for both this world and the next, as time makes its inroads upon us, and the clouds begin to gather, and the light gets dim.

[1] R. H. Hadden.

There is nothing discouraging or unchristian in observing and yielding to this progressive process. At least it reveals and 'indicates the many-sidedness of God's great nature,' and everything which helps towards that must be pleasing to Him. And yet men often talk as if the salvation of these immortal souls of ours, each with its inherent limitations, its secret story, its separate environment, its unsummoned moments of rebellion and surrender, its pride, its grief, its awful tragedy—men talk as if the salvation of these is to depend not upon the tender mercy and the loving kindness of God, but upon our intellectual acceptance of a body of doctrine set forth with the precision of a code of law or the requirements of an exact science. Perhaps so—perhaps, too, not. We shall all know some day. Meanwhile there is room, even with the best of us, for a fuller recognition of that belief which is 'more profoundly true'—so it has been put—'than any religion supposes'—a real belief in God. It does not matter that by searching we cannot find Him out, that His ways are not our ways, or His thoughts our thoughts. That is of the very nature of the case. We are finite; He is infinite. Were it otherwise, He would not be God. That God He is, is the first and last demand upon the faith—or the credulity, if you like—of mortal man. Whatever else may have to go, hold tight to that. 'Thank God.' 'God knows.'

So only will the riddles of life cease to tear and vex us. So only shall we realize that they cannot here be unravelled, that what now seems strange and harsh will in the ageless life appear plain and kind, that all will be well at last, that God is right after all.

God is all-wise, all-powerful, and all good—
I speak to those alone who hold Him so:
All-wise and knoweth therefore what is best:
All-good and willeth therefore what is best:
All-powerful—can do therefore what is best:
And if He can, why, *must*.

The Ways of God.

Job xi. 7, 8.—'Canst thou by searching find out God? (RVm 'Canst thou find out the deep things of God?') Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell (RV 'Sheol,' RVm 'the grave'); what canst thou know?'

In one of the most striking of Walt Whitman's poems that gifted interpreter of the modern soul thus writes:

Of the terrible doubt of appearances,
Of the uncertainty, after all, that we may be deluded,
That may-be reliance and hope are but speculations after all,
That may-be identity beyond the grave is a beautiful fable only,
May-be the things I perceive, the animals, plants, men, hills, shining and flowing waters,
The skies of day and night, colours, densities, forms, may-be these are (as doubtless they are) only apparitions, and the real something has yet to be known,
(How often they dart out of themselves as if to confound me and mock me!
How often I think neither I know nor any man knows aught of them),
May-be seeming to me what they are (as doubtless they indeed but seem) as from my present point of view, and might prove (as, of course, they would) nought of what they appear, or nought anyhow, from entirely changed points of view.

Whitman is here the modern Job, and our text is Zophar's answer. Zophar objects to Job's lengthy complaints, declares them to be only a multitude of words, and enters a sharp remonstrance against them. He accuses Job of being self-deceived, making himself out to be pure when he is not pure, and righteous in the sight of God when he is probably nothing of the kind if he could only be got to own it. Zophar maintains that so far from having afflicted Job unjustly, God has visited upon him less than his iniquity deserved. To challenge God's dealings with him is, there-

fore, the extreme of folly and presumption. Job keeps on demanding to know what God is doing with him, what his miseries are sent for, what is the inscrutable purpose behind all the chaos and confusion of his experience, and Zophar's reply to this is to insist how futile it is, that the best thing to do is humbly to accept the situation and remain in ignorance of what lies behind: 'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know?' It is not God Himself so much as the ways of God or the wisdom of God, the justification of the Divine ordinances, that Zophar here declares to be beyond human comprehension. The apostrophe might therefore read thus: 'Canst thou find out the unsearchable things of God? Canst thou reach to the fullness of the Almighty? Higher than heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know?'

Taking the metaphor at its full value, the meaning is no doubt this: 'Who are you to demand that God shall explain Himself and justify His ways to men? How could you understand if He did? What faculty have you got for comprehending that which is higher than heaven and deeper than hell?'

1. One of the most oft-repeated plaints of those upon whom life bears heavily, and who reflect much upon the problem thus occasioned, is that they can see no reason why their disabilities have to be endured. If they could find such a reason, if it could be made plain to them without possibility of mistake, the situation might be easier to bear; if they could be shown any good that was being accomplished, any worthy end being served—not necessarily for themselves, but for anyone else or for the whole of existence—by the experience to which they are being subjected, they would accept it cheerfully or, at least, with willing resignation. It is the seeming purposelessness, utter uselessness, of much of the suffering of the world that renders those who have to bear it rebellious against their lot.

A man in the prime of life, strong in character, and endowed with exceptional mental ability is suddenly laid aside by an incurable disease. He discusses gravely the question whether he would be justified in hastening the end, seeing that henceforth he must be a burden to others, and especially to those he loves the best. He is too big a man, morally speaking, to indulge in fretful protests against the fate that has overtaken him; he tries his best to remain serene and cheerful for the sake of those about him; he does not want to make them any sadder than he can help; but what he dreads principally is that as time goes on his physical break-up will deteriorate his mental quality, and then he will begin to behave differently. He feels rather mournful at this prospect, for he has seen too much of it in others not to know what it means; one of the most tragic things in connection with mortal illnesses, he says, is the way in which a man's strength of will and finer qualities of character and intellect become undermined, gradually sink out of sight, and leave only the animal or the child behind; it is very pitiful and shocking. And so this doomed sufferer avows that he would rather die soon. But not, he quickly adds, if anything worth doing is being done by the protraction of the agony: he could face it then with undaunted front. Show me one good thing, he demands, one sufficient and justifiable reason for my pangs, and I trust I am enough of a soldier not to run away from the post I am bidden to defend.

¶ Only a few days ago I happened to be in the company of a brave little woman I had never seen before, but of whose sad life-story I knew something. That woman's life was spoilt many years ago; everything was taken from her then that made it glad and filled it with promise. It was in some ways a shameful story, full of sordid and humiliating details from which a refined and sensitive nature would naturally shrink with disgust. But somehow it did not stop there; it was not a case of the delivery of one shattering blow and then all over. From that day to this everything pretty well that could happen has happened to aggravate the situation. One misfortune has followed another until at length as a finishing touch, just as things had begun

to look brighter, and new and precious friendships had been formed, giving life a new beauty and value, sentence of death has been pronounced; that woman is dying of a complication of maladies that may take a long time in killing her, but of the final issue there can be no doubt. Bright as she is, for she is naturally gifted with plenty of spirit, she cannot help feeling, like Job, that the whole business is rather unfair. What is it for? she wants to know. There is no trace of morbidness or even of self-commiseration about her plea. She simply feels that there ought to be a reason given for all this, or some kind of revelation as to its worth and significance, if it has any. And in almost identical terms to those already mentioned, she addressed me thus on the occasion referred to: 'Can you show me any good thing that is being done by such lives as mine? I don't mean for myself alone; I am scarcely interested in that; but I should like to know if anything is being gained anywhere by my pain. If so, I almost think I could be glad to have suffered and could smile in the face of death; otherwise I cannot.'

2. Return to Whitman. Whitman further testifies, in the poem already quoted, concerning appearances:—

To me, these, and the like of these, are curiously answered by my lovers, my dear friends,
When he in whom I love travels with me or sits a long while holding me by the hand,
When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that words and reason hold not, surround us and pervade us,
Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom, I am silent, I require nothing further,
I cannot answer the question of appearances or that of identity beyond the grave,
But I walk or sit indifferent, I am satisfied,
He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied me.

One can grasp the poet's gospel. He means that there is that in all intercourse of spirit with spirit which negatives every menace, every dread, every pessimistic prophecy concerning what is to happen to us. That which cannot be stated in words, and cannot even be reasoned about with any high satisfaction, is yet the one thing of which he can be surest. 'I cannot understand, I love' is the greatest of the reasons of the soul. As said the Apostle, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' I know—but how do I know? One can know only by living the life. Nothing will open to us the great secret of the soul's reason why—the reason which has nothing to do with reason, the reason which no mere cleverness can ever touch, much less understand—except the vision that comes by faith; it is an assurance that depends utterly and entirely upon the possession of the spiritual mind, the mind that craves for holiness, that loathes and seeks to escape from sin, that longs for God and wills to do His will.

The mind cannot pass beyond the phenomenal, but the soul can and does, and enters into communion with that which is like itself in the super-sensuous. In Jesus Christ our Lord eternal Spirit has made itself known to us in terms of the phenomenal, but in the very act of so doing has exhibited its transcendental character. Not to the wisdom of the natural man, but to that which is as the heart of a little child, is the glory revealed. In the vast confusion and conflict of things as perceived by our mortal intelligence there is nothing to terrify or appal him whose life is hid with Christ in God. It is simple goodness that is the true wisdom, and yet not self-conscious goodness, not hard 'moralism,' if one may coin a word, but teachableness, receptivity, openness to the influence of the highest. It is the pure in heart who see God. In fellowship with Christ, in actual daily living intercourse with the love of God, is the true solvent for all our ills.

If your heart is right with God, if your soul is aflame with the love of Christ, all your questions are answered, although they remain as great a mystery as ever to the mind. You no longer ask, What is the reason of this? or,

Why do I suffer that? or, What good thing, if any, is being wrought by my passion and sacrifice? You only say, 'To me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' You see without seeing, you know without knowing. You are at home with the everlasting right, you dwell with the love that passeth knowledge, that is higher than heaven and deeper than hell. You do what you do, and you bear what you bear, because it is the will of the Father, because you are called into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ; that is enough, and for the fuller revealing you can wait until body and mind can confine the soul no more. Yea, and in the midst of all the discipline, and all the burden bearing, and all the trouble and confusion of earth, a strangely winsome joy will ever be yours, the joy of heaven, the joy of the Lord, the joy that is the seal of God's own presence, the joy over which neither the world nor the grave has any power, which is independent of all outward circumstances, and rises out of nothing that the wisdom of this world can either bestow or remove.[1]

God is;
God sees;
God loves;
God knows.
And Right is Right;
And Right is Might.
In the full ripeness of His Time,
All these His vast prepotencies
Shall round their grace-work to the prime
Of full accomplishment,
And we shall see the plan sublime
Of His beneficent intent.
Live on in hope!
Press on in faith!
Love conquers all things,
Even Death.[2]

[1] R. J. Campbell, in *The Christian Commonwealth*, Nov. 19, 1913.
[2] John Oxenham, '*All's Well!*', 10.

Earth the Schoolmaster.

Job xii. 8.—'Speak to the earth; and it shall teach thee.'

I HAVE learned
To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In Nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.[1]

Fellowship with Nature has sometimes been the form a man's religion has taken. Wordsworth was its prophet and its priest. To him the light of the setting sun, the blue of the summer sky, the moving of the currents of air, the ceaseless activity of the ocean-tides were as the very presence of God stirring his spirit, elevating his thought, and calming his inmost soul. Richard Jefferies was so thrilled by the wonder and spirituality of the world in which he lived that he would throw himself in a transport of delight on the bosom of the ground, and stretch himself out on the shore to kiss the lips of the mysterious sea as it whispered its secrets to the rocks and sands it would fain embrace. And, even if we do not feel inclined to go to such lengths as these, a sense of sympathy with the mother-earth on

[1] Wordsworth.

which we live is essential to any proper understanding of its purpose and meaning.[1]

God speaks to some people mainly through external Nature, and to others mainly through their own hearts. The great astronomer, Kepler, is reported to have said: 'My wish is that I may perceive the God whom I find everywhere in the external world, in like manner within and inside me.' On the other hand, there have been many who have heard the voice of God speaking within, to their hearts, but have looked in vain for any clear token of His presence in the world, which is governed by natural law. God speaks to us all in our own language, and differences of temperament and education account for a great deal. We may hardly aspire, with Blake,

> To see a World in a grain of sand,
> And a Heaven in a wild flower,
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
> And Eternity in an hour.

We shall hardly even go so far as the poet Wither, who says of his muse:

> By the murmur of a spring,
> Or the least bough's rustelling;
> By a daisy, whose leaves spread
> Shut when Titan goes to bed,
> Or a shady bush or tree,
> She could more infuse in me
> Than all nature's beauties can
> In some other wiser man.

But we hope that we are able to 'speak to the earth,' and to understand, in part at least, the earth's answers.

1. But how different are the answers which the earth seems to give to different people!

(1) Some of us have read Mr. Hichens' *The Garden of Allah*, a brilliant novel in which the weird fascination of the African desert, the Sahara, is painted in vivid colours. Another writer has described the similar but yet different voice of the great American plains. 'The prairie has spoken to him,' he writes, 'as sooner or later it spoke to most men who rode it. It was a something well known among them, but known without words, for no man who had experienced it ever spoke willingly about it afterwards. Only the man would be changed; some began to be more reckless, as if a dumb blasphemy rankled hidden in their hearts. Others, coming perhaps with greater strength to the ordeal, became quieter, looking squarely at any danger as they faced it, but continuing ahead as though quietly confident that nothing happened save as the gods ordained.' This is one way in which men's characters are formed. We can fancy what the effect must be of living on a vast and desolate plain, over which the great eye of heaven, rising out of a level horizon, watches one pitilessly throughout the day, till it sinks beneath the same level again. The sense of personality, of human power and responsibility, is shrivelled in that vast unchanging landscape. The religion that emerges from it is fatalism, the hopeless, besotted fatalism of the Russian peasant, or the fierce fanatical fatalism of the Arab dervish. Race may follow race in these regions, but the earth speaks to them all in turn; even a change of religion is only a change in the name of the deity; his character remains the same.

(2) How different is the spiritual atmosphere of a mountainous country! Without thinking of the high Alps, which were hardly designed for the home of man, and where the few peasants are too much cut off from each other for a happy and intelligent life; take such a district as the English Lakes, where, it has been well said, 'There is no corner without a meaning and a charm; where all agencies have conspired for loveliness, and ruin itself has been benign.'[1] It is a real spiritual privilege to live in such a country. Many people there have echoed the words of the Psalmist, 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.' Just as repentance, forgiveness, and purification are brought home to us by watching the sea—the great waters never resting from their priest-like task—'the sea' which, says Euripides, 'washes away all human ills'—so the larger life of enlightenment, aspiration, and worship, becomes ours for a time when we stand upon a mountain-top, and cast our eyes around and below us.

[1] R. Killip.

[1] F. W. H. Myers, *Wordsworth*.

¶ I have always regretted that by the wrong punctuation of that great verse of the Psalmist its meaning has been totally distorted—'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.' Not that the Psalmist meant that his help came from the hills at all, but he just felt that they excited within him the very biggest questions to which the human heart desires an answer. They open the mind, they stir it to questioning, to prayer and to expectation, as no other natural phenomena on the face of the earth do; and all who have had the privilege of spending days among the hills, either in our own country or in other lands, know how they exalt the soul, clean the heart of all evil humours and bring us into the temper and the attitude of worship while we are among them.[1]

Our Lord Himself was deeply affected by mountain scenery. He loved the mountains; the Gospels would be much impoverished if all the mountain scenes were cut out. His first great moral struggle, at the beginning of His ministry, ended on an exceeding high mountain. It was on a mountain, at day-break, that He chose the Twelve Apostles from among His disciples. At Jerusalem, His favourite retreat was the Mount of Olives. The three chapters of St. Matthew which we call the Sermon on the Mount were spoken on a mountain. The Transfiguration took place on a mountain-summit. It was on a mountain in Galilee that the last great commission—the marching orders of the Church, as the Duke of Wellington called them—was given to the Apostles. Is not this a rather remarkable list of mountain scenes in a short narrative? Our Lord seems to have almost lived on hill-tops whenever He could do so without hindrance to His mission.

2. The feelings awakened in us by speaking to the earth vary as widely as the scenes. To the savage, Nature is a mysterious and probably malevolent power, whom it is prudent to propitiate by presents. Others have seen only the contrast between man's impotence and Nature's ruthless destructiveness. Tennyson's 'Nature, red in tooth and claw with ravin' has no message of mercy to man.

Others, disciples of Plato, hold that the beauties of Nature were meant to lead us up to the contemplation of heavenly beauty. So Spenser says:

> The means, therefore, which unto us is lent,
> Him to behold is on his works to look,
> Which he hath made in beauty excellent,
> And in the same, as in a brasen book,
> To read enregistered in every nook
> His goodness, which his beauty doth declare;
> For all that's good is beautiful and fair.
>
> Thence gathering plumes of perfect speculation,
> To impe the wings of thy high flying mind,
> Mount up aloft through heavenly contemplation,
> From this dark world, whose damps the soul do blind,
> And, like the native brood of eagles kind,
> On that bright sun of glory fix thine eyes,
> Clear'd from gross mists of frail infirmities.

Or again, the feeling awakened may be a sense of sublimity and magnificence. 'I will consider thy heavens, even the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained. Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him?' This feeling, which may be thoroughly religious, is and should be stronger with us than in pre-scientific times, when the infinite extension of the universe in space and time was only guesswork.

Others, again, of whom in poetry Matthew Arnold may be taken as a type, value Nature for her calming and soothing influence, in contrast with the anxious fretful life of the human race. Wordsworth and his numerous disciples go to the mountains and lakes with different motives. Their study of Nature is a reverent worship, prepared for by moral discipline and renunciation of the world; and the reward they hope to gain is not a vision of beauty, but insight into the *life* of things. The poet describes his mental state as 'a sinking inward into one's self from thought to thought, a steady remonstrance, and a high resolve.' Nature is the rich background from which

[1] G. A. Smith.

precious influences flow in upon the soul of him who has so purified his heart as to be responsive to all her revelations.

Lastly—and perhaps no truer message about natural religion has come to our generation—in the poetry of George Meredith we are bidden to look upon Nature as our friend and mother, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—a power to be honoured and trusted.

I say but that this love of Earth reveals
A soul beside our own to quicken, quell,
Irradiate, and through ruinous floods uplift.

The man who lives 'obedient to nature, not her slave; her lord, if to her rigid laws he bows,' may rise through flesh to mind, through mind to soul and spirit, and learn the lesson:

The lesson writ in red since time began,
A hunter hunting down the beast in man:
That till the chasing out of its last vice
The flesh was fashioned but for sacrifice.

3. The lesson of sacrifice is writ in red, no doubt, upon the book of Nature. But it does not 'shriek against the creed' of Christendom; it rather confirms and illustrates it. The great lesson of Nature is that no man or thing liveth for himself. We all need each other; our true life is not self-centred. The scheme of things is not constructed on the basis of justice to individuals. The individual is sacrificed ruthlessly; vicarious sacrifice, though not vicarious punishment, is the law of life. Many who have seen this have become pessimists, and have asked why they should any longer be the dupes of a power which only wants to use them for its own ends, and cares nothing for their happiness. But the true moral of it all is that selfishness is always and everywhere contrary to Nature, and doomed to shipwreck. And the practical application is surely not that we should give up life, as the pessimists say, but selfishness. When we watch the acts of self-sacrifice which, in obedience to instinct, are punctually and uncomplainingly performed by all God's creatures for the continuance of their species, we must realize that the selfish and idle man is a blot, a disease, in God's world. Nature's message is to call back her children from self-indulgence and selfishness to a nobler discipline. As the prophet Hosea says: 'Ephraim is a heifer that loveth to tread out the corn; but I have passed over her fair neck. Judah shall plough, and Jacob shall break his clods.' Accept the law of service and sacrifice, and Nature will smile hope and encouragement upon you; take to yourself the devil's maxim of 'each for himself, and the devil take the hindmost,' and Nature will drive you into pessimism by showing you that your schemes are inevitably doomed to disappointment.[1]

¶ When I ask myself *why* this crushing inroad upon the sweetest, purest, most satisfying form of human life? I am lost in the darkness, and dare not pretend to see my way. But the less I can reach the Divine point of view, the more quietly do I subside upon the human, and, in spite of appearances or in impenetrable gloom, give my hand, like a child in the night, to be led by the All-seeing Father, hither or thither as He will. This is not the blindness of mere unthinking faith, rather is it the large willingness to sink the personal point of vision—even at its fiercest intensity—in judging of the Infinite, within whose compass I lie, and of whose goodness not my privation, but the plenitude of the whole, is the true measure. Were we able to see the purpose of our sorrows, as we do that of some surgical treatment, the state of mind with which we meet them would surely be unspeakably lowered; prudent and rational endurance for the sake of ulterior advantage would take the place of that confiding piety and utter self-surrender, which, the more it bleeds, the more gives out the hues of every tender and great affection.[2]

[1] W. R. Inge.
[2] *The Life and Letters of James Martineau*, i. 448.

TESTING TRUTH.

Job xii. 11.—'Doth not the ear try words, even as the palate tasteth its meat?' (RV).
1 John iv. 1.—'Try the spirits whether they are of God.'
1 Thess. v. 21.—'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.'

HERE are three sayings of three very different men, yet there is to be found in them a certain similarity of thought.

Take Job first. In the passage quoted Job asserts his independence, at once claiming his privilege and confessing his obligation to think and judge for himself. The ear here represents the reasoning faculty, and Job argues that 'just as the palate instinctively tests the food we eat, so man's reason intuitively tests the truth or falsehood of the words he hears.'[1]

Now take St. Paul. His famous injunction to the Thessalonians is one of the most forcible expressions in the whole Bible of the continually recurring idea that no matters of belief, whether they relate to the material, the intellectual, or the spiritual aspects of life, are to be received blindly, but that, though we must always be ready to receive new truth (lest haply we be found even to fight against God) we must never do so without first testing or, as our Bible puts it, *proving* it. The Greek word is a very strong one: its root-meaning is to test by the art of the assayer; it is the word which would be applied to the testing of metals or similar substances. The Apostle warns the Thessalonians against receiving statements regarding religious truth on mere assertion. They are exhorted to apply fitting tests, and then to reject what is false and adopt what is true.

The writer of the Fourth Gospel urges his readers to 'prove the spirits,' that is, to test the claims of those who profess to be inspired teachers. They may indeed have an inspiration, but it may be from Satan.

These exhortations are appropriate still. God makes a direct appeal to our reason in regard to the subjects of our faith. Yet plain and repeated as are St. Paul's injunctions, and those also of the writer of the Fourth Gospel, there was a time not so far distant when to admit that any point of popular religious belief was even susceptible to test was held to be equivalent to denying religious truth altogether.

But nowadays this is changing. Everything that man knows or fancies, that he believes or denies, is now brought to the bar of critical reason and summoned to give an account of itself, that it may establish or renounce its claims. Systems of faith and systems of philosophy, theories of government and theories of revenue, the laws of fashion and the laws of trade, the creeds of religion and the creeds of atheism, dogmatic assertions and agnostic denials, even theories of literature, poetry, diet, exercise, and fashion, are all distinctly challenged as they pass in slow or rapid review before the eye of criticism, and are tried and tested by its more or less competent tribunals. There are people who consider the change to be regrettable, but a little reflection will show that this is not really the case. A man who receives the truth without reason is liable, when error is presented with more plausible attractions, to receive it without reason also. Besides, when teachers of the truth refuse to give reasons for the maintenance of that truth, or discourage the investigation of its claims and pretensions, they convey, intentionally or unintentionally, the impression that they hold a creed that is incapable of proof. And unbelievers are prone to encourage the notion that the Christian religion is always to be received without reason; that it is believing, and not reasoning; that implicit credence, not rational investigation, is the ground and basis of the claims and the acceptance of Christianity. Yet, however much Christians may unwittingly support that contention, the unbelievers are wrong, for the inspired writers do not shrink from discussion. They demand it. They substantially assert that the man

[1] A. B. Davidson and H. C. O. Lanchester, *Job* (Camb. Bible), 107.

who cannot give an answer for the faith that is in him, has either believed the truth on insufficient grounds or accepted error in its stead. If we refer to any part of the Epistles, or to any chapter of the Acts, we shall see it constantly urged against the Jews that they received what they believed by tradition from the fathers, not as the result of personal inquiry, and therefore they were wrong. But, on the other hand, we find the Apostles asserting, 'these things are written that ye might believe'—facts are stated, reasons are assigned, the ground is given on which you are to believe—'that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.'

¶ The Bereans were praised, because when an apostle preached—and *a fortiori*, if an apostle's successor, real or pretended, preaches—they did not implicitly accept, but carefully tested, and these Bereans were therefore more noble than the rest, because they searched the Scriptures, whether these things were so.[1]

1. *The Christian tests his beliefs.*—Obedience to St. Paul's command on the part of Christians would prevent the existence or at least check the progress, of two common and serious evils, namely, credulity and presumption. Many professing Christians admit without proof things which, if tested, would be discovered to be utterly worthless; and as many, perhaps, reject, as evil, things which, if their worth were known, would be reckoned as more precious than rubies, more valuable than gold and silver. We of the Reformed Churches have been accustomed to censure the Church of Rome for her refusal to allow her members to do anything but take their doctrines on trust. The censure is a just one, but this spirit is not exclusively Roman. The rightful authority of the Bible, for example, has been greatly weakened by the ignorant zeal which maintains that the Bible is literally inspired, that it is free from errors, that it is equally authoritative in every part, and for every purpose, that its words may be pleaded against the reason and conscience of mankind. But the Bible was never intended to take from the individual Christian the burden of his personal responsibility or to discharge him from the high duty of using the faculties with which the Creator endowed him. To think of the Bible in this way is to make it, not the living word, but a dead fetish. It is not to strengthen our faith but to weaken it. Truth seeks the light, comes to the light, rejoices in the light. Error loves darkness, grows in darkness, and reluctantly comes into the light, which at once reveals and rebukes its deformity. A true Christianity knows that correct knowledge, and not gross ignorance, is the mother of genuine devotion. A true Christianity welcomes truth from whatever quarter it comes and by whatever messengers it is brought.

Let us, then, as professing Christians, obey the apostolic precepts. Let us 'try the spirits' and 'prove all things'—*all things*—opinions, doctrines, requirements, practices, customs, beliefs, creeds, professions, characters, modes of working, keeping always before our minds Hooker's noble words, which, if they had been followed, would have prevented many a sore scandal and loss to Christendom, and many a sore hindrance to the coming of the Kingdom. 'Whatsoever is spoken of God or things appertaining to God otherwise than as the truth is, though it seem an honour, it is an injury. And as incredible praises given unto men do often abate and impair the credit of their deserved commendation, so we must likewise take great heed, lest in attributing unto Scripture more than it can have, the incredibility of that do cause even those things which indeed it hath most abundantly to be less reverently esteemed.'[1]

¶ Prove all *ancient* things. Things are not a whit the better for being old. Sin is older than ourselves; but it is not the less evil or better for being old. And there is no church custom that is better for being old. It may be old, and bad. Prove all *new* things. A thing is not wise because it is new, or adapted to the times because it is new. It may be a new folly. Prove all *common* things. Things are not right because they are generally acceptable. Prove all *singular* things. The singu-

[1] J. Cumming, *The Daily Life*, 166.

[1] R. Hooker, *Works*, v. (ed. Keble), 423.

larity of a thing speaks nothing for it. A thing may be good or bad though singular. Prove all *attractive* things. These too have often misled our fallen human nature, and have especially to be proved. The things that are particularly attractive to us are often the most false—exquisitely fair, but hellishly false. Then there are *repulsive* things which must be proved. A thing is not to be put aside because it is repulsive. Christ, for example, may put in our path a cross, rough and blood-stained. May we turn from it because it is repulsive? Nay, rather let us ask who has put it there? And if we find that He who bore our cross for us, the cross of our guilt, put it there, let us lift it, and let us carry it. 'Prove all things'—probable things, and improbable things—ALL.[1]

2. *The Christian tests his beliefs fairly.*—We must not only test our beliefs but test them *fairly,* by the right tests.

(1) The wrong tests are many. We can prove nothing if our tests are false ones, and at the same time belief in a false test may blind us in ugly ways. Phillips Brooks speaks in his private notebook of 'the danger, the terrible danger, of false tests!' . . . John Wesley says, "Infidels know, whether Christians know it or not, that the giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible." ' The by-product of such a test was the torture and death of thousands of innocent women and girls, and even children, and of many men who were moved with a pure and keen desire for scientific knowledge.

We may say that now that the age of religious persecution is, or seems to be, over, this is not a very real danger. Perhaps not: but there is a more intimate one, which is real enough. To believe in false tests is to base our faith on such a shaky foundation that it may be easily overthrown. To see any of our props broken is apt to make us think that the whole structure is falling about our ears. How many young people, brought up in protected homes, have gone out into the world and for the first time heard the Christian faith attacked, or have listened to lectures which apparently took away the foundations of it. The arguments have seemed convincing and they have drifted into doubt or unbelief. To prevent this we are often tempted to turn our back on what we know is true. If I think that all is lost, that my hopes for eternity are gravely compromised unless Moses wrote the account of his own death in Deuteronomy, I shall be tempted to make my reason blind, and endeavour at least to believe that I believe that it is believable that he might possibly have written this. This is not an exaggerated instance. As recently as the end of the nineteenth century, the 'new' views about the Old Testament drove many people who were afraid to test their faith into just such a dilemma. If Moses did not write the Pentateuch, if the details of the Law had little connection with Mount Sinai, if Egyptian history went back more than 6000 years, it seemed as if the foundations of the Faith were gone. To-day it would be too much to say that the difficulty is gone; but surely it is much less than it was. Few find it impossible to accept the new learning and yet be Christians, and those who do have for the most part applied to religion tests which are manifestly false.

¶ Those who say that if an error is found in the date of some ancient king or kingdom, or in the number engaged or killed in some ancient battle, therefore we must give up the inspiration of the Bible and the divinity of the Lord, are guilty of illogical reasoning and of a foolish surrender to the foes of revelation. They ought not to stake the defence of the citadel on maintaining an unimportant outpost.[1]

This danger of false tests is as real with people as with beliefs. We often—especially in religious matters—go widely wrong by applying false tests to them. The false prophets have been busy always in broadening that which God made strait and in narrowing that which He made wide. For our Lord declared that heaven was near and accessible and that in it there was room enough for all; but the heaven of the false prophets is a narrow and limited place. And yet again, the false prophets break down the side-posts of the gate-

[1] S. Martin.

[1] R. S. MacArthur.

way of heaven and make wide that which Christ made narrow. The false prophets make much of words, and little of deeds, reversing Christ's order; for whereas our Lord said, 'By their fruits ye shall know them,' the false prophets say, 'By their opinions ye shall know them.' Our Lord said, 'No man that can do a miracle in my name can lightly speak evil of me.' But the mistaken and officious disciple forbids the work of such a man, 'because he followeth not us.' We ask men to recite their belief, where Christ asks men to give their heart. And this is putting the thing the wrong way; for a man may find his creed through his heart, but never his heart through his creed, seeing that a man may recite the true creed and yet not know Christ or heaven; but we cannot know Christ or heaven without soon coming to the best of creeds.

¶ There are some who would not for a moment hesitate to send to the hottest hell the man, however saintly, who has not been in their church, who has not learned to pronounce their Shibboleth. These same men will come to the bedside of a man who has been cruel, sinful, unclean all his life. If, six days before he dies, dies as the result of his own misdeeds, he can be induced to say certain words with apparent sincerity, they will send that man to the highest seat in glory.[1]

¶ Horne had not thought it necessary to read Wesley's writings before replying to them. For him, as for many other disputants, the business of refuting his opponent's opinions was made much easier by taking the precaution of omitting to know what they were.[2]

(2) What, then, are the right tests? If we consider a little we shall soon see. First, all truth is of God, therefore if two things cannot *both* be true, one of them is not of God. But we are not to be in a hurry. If a new truth contradicts an old truth, we are not to assume at once that it is either true or false —we are to *prove* it. We are not to assume that the new is true *because* it is new any more than we are to assume that the old is true because this is the first time we have seen it contradicted. Secondly, even if on close examination the acceptance of the new truth involves the rejection of truths previously held, we must not make too much of this by letting the new undermine more than necessary the old. Evolution was at one time said to negate Christianity because it was incompatible with the literal truth of parts of early Jewish literature. Now we find it a most inspiring addition to our conception of the majesty of God and the scheme of salvation.

But when it is a case, not of the absolute truth or error of a belief, but of the relative value of a doctrine, what are we to do? Christ gave us the answer long ago—'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Phillips Brooks says well that 'every change of religious thought ought to justify itself by a deepened and extended morality. About my being humble and full of faith any man may be mistaken. About my being honest and pure it is far less possible to err. Therefore it is a blessed thing for all religions that the standards of morality stand clearly facing it and saying, "Can you do this? Can you make men brave instead of cowardly, kind instead of cruel, true instead of false?" For every new form of religious thinking it is a blessed thing that, full of its first fresh enthusiasm, it is compelled to pass along the road where the old solemn judges sit who have judged all the ages, the judges before whose searching gaze many an ardent young opinion has withered away and known its worthlessness, the judges who ask of every comer the same unchanging question: "Can you make men better men?" No conceit of spirituality or wisdom must make any new opinion think it can escape that test. He who leaves the plain road where the great judges sit and thinks that he can get round behind them and come into the road again beyond where they are sitting, is sure to fall into some slough of subtlety and to be seen of men no more.'[1]

John Wesley speaks with the same voice in replying to Church's virulent attack on the teachings of Methodism. 'By the fruits shall we know those of whom I speak; even the cloud of witnesses who at this hour experience the doctrine I preach to be the power of God

[1] C. Leach.
[2] W. H. Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century*, 343.

[1] *Essays and Addresses*, 229.

unto salvation. The habitual drunkard that was, is now temperate in all things. The whoremonger now flees fornication. He that stole steals no more, but works with his hands. He that has cursed or swore, perhaps at every sentence, has now learned to serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with reverence. These are demonstrable facts. I can name the men, with their several places of abode.'[1]

3. *The Christian tests his belief effectually.*—That is to say, the test has a real and not merely a theoretical value. In 'proving all things,' we are supposed to lay hold of some 'good' things. Now these good things are to be *'held fast.'*

Yet instead of 'holding fast that which is good,' how often we let it slip from our careless grasp. There are some things in life which we should never let go. Our faith, our trust, our hope, our youthful piety, our sacred associations, our reverence, our innocence—let us not lose these as we grow old. Especially, let us not carelessly suffer to slip away from us our enthusiasms, ideals, and visions. Mazzini says, somewhere, that many people in the morning of life are full of poetry, of high resolves, and noble enthusiasms, but that they gradually become prematurely old, and lose them all. He adds, 'They think themselves becoming solid and practical, when they really are becoming sordid and common.' How pitiable it is when things which were once dear to us are growing less dear, year by year, till eventually they are allowed to drop out of our life altogether! O Lord, help us to 'hold fast that which is good!'

Oh for the time gone by when thought of Christ
Made His yoke easy and His burden light!
When my heart stirred within me at the sight
Of altar spread with awful Eucharist:
When all my hopes His promises sufficed:
When my soul watched for Him, by day, by night:
When my lamp lightened and my robe was white,
And all seemed loss except the pearl unpriced.
Yet, since He calls me still with tender call,
Since He remembers whom I half forgot,
I even will run my race and bear my lot:
For faith the walls of Jericho cast down,
And Hope to whoso runs holds forth a crown,
And Love is Christ, and Christ is all in all.[1]

[1] W. H. Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century*, 341.

Trust in God.

Job xiii. 15.—'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'

Cheyne calls this 'an inspired mistranslation.' And certainly it has taken a remarkable hold on the human mind. Carlyle quotes it in a letter to Erskine of Linlathen: 'Had not a God made this world, and made Death too, it were an insupportable place. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Even so. In whom else, or in what else?'[2] Caroline Fox similarly quotes it, without a suspicion, in her Journals (i. 236), making the proof that Job 'saw somewhat into the inner secret of God's providence.' On Mrs. Gaskell's tombstone, at the base of the figure in the bronze bas-relief is a copy of *Cranford* and a laurel wreath, with a quill pen through the ribbon which ties the wreath. Below, in the stone work, is inscribed: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him' (Job xiii. 15). 'Words dear to Mrs. Gaskell, often quoted by her, and amongst the last she uttered.'[3] James Martineau, who was a scholar, quotes the verse unhesitatingly as the expression of utter trust and rest: 'When we have told and compared our best thought, it all resolves itself, does it not? into simple trust and love. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."'[4] Lady Dilke says finely in *The Book of the Spiritual Life:* 'Not until the passion of self-abandonment has touched the point at which the words, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," are the simple and natural expression of pride and joy is that height of exaltation reached the attainment of which includes the highest

[1] Christina G. Rossetti
[2] J. A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle*, i. 246.
[3] E. H. Chadwick, *Mrs. Gaskell*, 316.
[4] J. Drummond and C. B. Upton, *Life and Letters of J. Martineau*, i. 488.

possibilities of love and sorrow. For "love's limits are ample and great, and a spacious walk it hath, but with thorns not lightly to be passed over." ' Sir Edward Fry makes it the conclusion and clinch of his argument for the pursuit of truth: 'He must pursue it with a perfect indifference as to whither it may lead him, indifferent whether it may crown or crush his most favourite prejudices, or his most cherished hopes; he must pray for it as Orestes prayed for light—"Give light even though I die"; he must long for it, and trust in it, as the patient Job and many a devout soul has trusted in a God of Truth. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." '[1] It is the text of a short poem by Henry Septimus Sutton, of one of Walter Smith's simplest and best, and of this short lyric by Mrs. Muriel E. George

He trusts you with this sorrow, whispering,
As on the dreaded cross He sets your hand,
'Others might question, you will understand
How only Love, Love past imagining
Could bear to hurt you so, and you will take
Freely this meed of anguish for My sake.'

He trusts you not to doubt Him, He, your Friend!
You dare not shame that trust, and with wet eyes
Turn from the patient love that pitying cries,—
'Lean on My Heart, through My eyes see the end!
The blow was Mine, the recompense is Mine,
It shall suffice for every fear of thine!'[2]

It has also been made the text of many a moving sermon. In noting the mistranslation Professor A. B. Davidson makes the following remarks.[3]

'There are many mistranslated or misinterpreted passages in Scripture that have greatly supported pious thought and feeling, such as "I am that I am," the present passage, "magnify the law and make it honourable," and others, because, though inaccurate renderings of the particular passages, they expressed forcibly great general truths of Scripture, or at least truths certainly scriptural. The history of such passages finds its parallel in very many of the expositions of Scripture which are heard from week to week. They are anything but accurate, well-balanced exegeses of the passages formally expounded, but they set forth in a rough and right way a meaning for which there is Scripture somewhere or other, and doubtless benefit many of those who hear them—although they give the unhappy few *di color che sanno* a bad quarter of an hour now and then, driving the wretched men sometimes to exclaim, that if they perish it is going to church that will be their undoing. What might be called truthful exegesis is one of the rarest things to meet. The reason is that the power of producing it is not a gift but an acquirement. Many sermons bear witness to the brilliancy, the thoughtfulness, or even to the laboriousness in certain directions of their authors, but comparatively few give any evidence of a patient study of Scripture in its connexion.'

After these severe words it requires some courage to preach another sermon on the mistranslation. First of all, however, what is the true translation? The margin of RV is: 'Behold, he will slay me; I wait for him, or, according to another reading, I will not wait.' The meaning of the verse as thus rendered is clear. Job anticipates that his boldness in going before God to defend his ways will provoke God to destroy him, and he says he waits for His destroying blow, nevertheless he will defend his own ways. If the reading 'I will not wait' be accepted, then the meaning seems to be that Job will not wait for a more distant death, but will encounter the immediate one which his boldness makes too probable.

Returning to the translation of the Authorized Version, we notice that it is scarcely altered in the text of the Revised Version, and, whether it agrees with Job's words here or not, it is, as Newman says, a sentiment which often occurs in Scripture. In modern language it means first, know God, and then, believe in Him whatever He does.

[1] A. Fry, *Memoir of Sir Edward Fry*, 231.
[2] *The Garden of Comfort*, 22.
[3] In *The Expositor*, 3rd ser., iv. 291.

1. First, know God. How do we know God? How do we come to know anyone? From what we see him do. What a man is declares itself through what he does. I see a man steal, and I know he has a thievish heart. I see a soldier fling himself upon the spears of the enemy, and I know that he is brave and patriotic. We know how closely this relation between character and conduct binds the two together. Each is a poor weak thing without the other. Character without conduct is dumb and paralysed. Its life is there, but it is shut out from action, and all man's history bears witness that it is shut out from growth. Mere qualities which do not become conscious of themselves, and do not make themselves effective by contact with the world of things, lie stagnant, and can hardly be called live qualities at all. And, on the other hand, conduct without character is thin and most unsatisfying. The pleasant deed which does not mean a kindly heart behind it, the dashing enterprise which is mere physical excitement, the steadiness in work which is merely mechanical habit and routine, the search for learning which is only curiosity—we all know how weary and unsatisfactory all of these become. No; conduct is the trumpet at the lips of character. Character without conduct is like the lips without the trumpet, whose whispers die upon themselves and do not stir the world. Conduct without character is like the trumpet hung up in the wind, which whistles through it and means nothing. The world has a right to demand that all which claims to be character should utter itself through conduct which can be seen and heard. The world has a right to disallow all claims of character which do not utter themselves in conduct.

¶ When Akabya, son of Mahalalel, was on his death-bed, his son asked, 'Father, commend me to thy friends.' 'No, my son,' said he, 'I shall not commend thee.' 'Hast thou found aught unworthy in me?' 'No, my son,' replied he, 'thy deeds will bring thee near unto men, and thy deeds will drive thee from them.' [1]

2. Believe in God whatever He does. We have considered the first relation between character and conduct: conduct utters and declares character. But it is not their only relation. It is through conduct that I know first what character is. I cannot enter into the knowledge of character in any other way; but when I have once entered into a knowledge of character through my perception of conduct, then something else occurs. I come to know character, to which conduct has first introduced me, by itself; and in its turn it becomes the interpreter of other conduct, so that I, who first knew what a man was by what he did, come afterward to understand the things he does by the knowledge of what he is to which I have attained.

Suppose that behind and through the treatment that God has given me I learn the character of God. God has been just to me. I have not rested merely on the instances of God's justice, but have risen to the conception that God is just. God has been loving to me. I do not merely recount God's loving acts, but see God, and say, 'Yes, God is love.' I go up along the conduct to the character. I go up along the sunlight to the sun. My nature, made to know God's nature, does know Him with immediate apprehension. The acts of God towards me are, as it were, the ushers which open the door and lead me into His presence. When I am once there the ushers may retire. I may forget the special acts of love or justice which first showed me what He was, and live in the direct perception of His character. If that is possible, then evidently I am ready to see each new act of God toward me with all the illumination of His realized character upon it. Let me be certain that He did it, and I know that it must be just and kind because He is love and justice. Let me know that the water flows directly from the fountain, and it must be pure, because the fountain, I know, is purity itself. The taste of corruption which seems to be in the water must really be in me who taste it. God, being good, cannot do evil. I, standing where all my experience has brought me, clear in His presence, know that He is good. Therefore, however cruel His deeds may seem, they cannot shake my certainty that He is kind; how-

[1] *A Book of Jewish Thoughts*, 292.

ever unreasonable His deeds may seem, they cannot shake my certainty that He is wise. Therefore, in the tumult and distress of what seems to be the ruin of my life, I can still stand calm and say, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'

And if to each individual's observation of God's ways we add the observation of the race in all its generations, it does appear as if we had a doctrine out of which must come at once intelligence and reverence—the possibility both of David's reasoning, 'I will praise him because he has dealt lovingly with me,' and of Job's faith, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'

It is interesting to see how this method of faith prevails in all the relations of the human mind to the objects of its trust. There is a possible confidence of soul in soul, won by the experience of the trusted soul's trustiness, which has again and again enabled one human being to say of another, 'Whatever he may do I will trust him.'

¶ If we turn to classic story we see how human nature loves the spectacle of such unquestioning faith. The Roman, Virginius, when his daughter is threatened with insult, cries with a voice full of woe and love together, 'There is no way but this,' and as he smites her, Virginia falls without a word or look except of loving trust. Or, again, we may recall the most pathetic of all the ancient tragedies, in which the gentle daughter of the Grecian leader gives her life to make possible the success of her father's army on its way to Troy. At first there is a terrible remonstrance and clinging to this sweet, earthly life; Iphigenia cries, 'The light of heaven is sweetest of things for men to behold, but that below is nought; and mad is he who seeks to die. To live dishonourably is better than to die gloriously.' But soon her father's terrible conviction takes possession of her. Her faith in him which he has won in all the years of his fatherly kindness does not desert her now; and at the last she is seen standing, a figure of exalting light and triumph and beauty, by his side, waiting to be sacrificed. 'Oh, father, I am here for thee, and I willingly give my body on behalf of my country and of the whole land of Greece, that leading it to the altar of the goddess they may sacrifice it, since this is ordained. . . . Thou hast nurtured me for a glory to Greece, and I will not refuse to die.' [1]

The Inheritance of Iniquity.

Job xiii. 26.—'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.'

Upon one of those earliest monuments, the Egyptian sepulchres, there is a representation of a Future Judgment. The deceased person advances to receive his sentence at the throne of the god Osiris. His actions are being weighed in the scales of Truth. Beside them stands a god, his accuser or his advocate, with a tablet in his left hand and in his right the recording pen. The tribunal of the unseen world is shadowed forth under forms which we know were employed in Egypt from the earliest times, where the writing of the adversary was always produced in court and read aloud. Those blurred and faded, yet still surviving, colours speak to us out of the long past ages. And whether we regard them as vestiges of some very early revelation, or trace them to a belief deeply seated in every human heart, a forecast of a future certainty, in either case how forcibly do they illustrate those words, 'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.' Yes! Such (varying no doubt in widely differing degrees) must be the universal confession. One, and one only, could ever say 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me,' no weak yielding, no point whereon to fasten his attack. Such must be the universal language of Conscience.[2]

The Revisers have introduced one alteration in the text which brings it into line with a favourite idea of our own time. In their translation it reads: 'Thou makest me to *inherit* the iniquities of my youth.' To-day books on natural science or ethics are saturated with this conception of heredity. A recent writer says of our democratic generation that 'it writes, it preaches, it talks, it thinks

[1] Phillips Brooks.
[2] F. St. John Thackeray.

biologically; and with the result among others that the idea of Heredity has been lodged beyond displacing in the mind of the average man.' Well, the great minds of Scripture had grasped that idea also; their sense of the continuity of life was at least as keen as ours. And yet what this verse speaks of is not the continuity of life in the generations, but the continuity of life within the individual's history. Not heredity between parent and child, but heredity between our early and our later years, between the youth and the grown man. Our present is direct heir of our past. The man of forty is legatee of the man of twenty. The estate is handed down undiminished—Nature takes care of that; there is no waste in the process; the legacy is ours without one farthing of abatement. We spend our years, the Psalmist writes, 'as a tale that is told,' and if there is anything essential to a tale it is this, surely, that later chapters shall inherit and carry on the substance of what preceded. Just so in our existence there are no sudden ruptures, no fortuitous transformations, no inexplicable gaps in the connected whole. The story all hangs together. Yesterday persists in to-day, and lays already its moulding hand upon to-morrow.

There are four ways in which God makes us to inherit our iniquities. They are closely bound up with each other, but we may consider them separately.

1. First, our sins come back on us as *bitter memories*. While a man yet possesses the relics of conscience, even if his being is involved in badness to the last fibre—every nerve in his body, every tissue of his brain, the very springs of thought tainted and defiled—still, while the shreds of a heart and conscience persist, some things he has done which have gone to make him what he is must now and then thrill him with pain. Thank God, that is how we have been made; we are not so desperately left to ourselves but that sins, certain sins at all events, do pain us. These bad deeds or thoughts leave poisoned wounds; they leave stains that burn as well as soil; even if there were no God, still we should feel them a disgrace to manhood. And perhaps of all the feelings that visit the human heart none is sadder than the helplessness with which we behold time flowing on resistlessly, bearing with it into the past wrong-doing we can never now set right. No power on earth is able to recall the once committed wrong. 'Four things,' says the Arab proverb, 'come not back—the spoken word, the sped arrow, the past life, the neglected opportunity.' The author dreams that, were his book still in his power, he would brighten that dull page or clinch that feeble argument; the painter longs for another hour before his finished canvas, brush in hand, that he might touch that cheek with a yet lighter grace, or deepen the shadow in a robe; but what are these to the yearnings of a soul that has sinned against the light, and knows the transgression gone beyond recall? If he has soiled his life with moral defilement, if by selfishness or folly he has lost for ever opportunities of goodness, if above all he has done irremediable injury to the bodies or souls of others, and let loose a stream of evil influence whose windings he can never more control, how piercing and yet how vain must be his sorrow as he longs that time's wheels could roll backward, and that fatal hour be his to live anew!

God gave His children memory
That in life's garden there might be
June roses in December.
But sin the Father's goodness scorns,
And weaves of them a crown of thorns,
That wounds when they remember.

Sharp stabbing points of vain regret,
Around my soul for ever set,
Turn June into December.
Ah Christ, Who wore my crown of thorns,
Have mercy on the heart that mourns,
Forgive, when I remember.[1]

2. Secondly, our sins come back on us as *disqualifying infirmities*. It is common knowledge that a man may so live that he becomes unfit for certain kinds of delicate and important work; his hand shakes, his eyesight deteriorates, and he has to step down in the

[1] G. A. Studdert-Kennedy, *Songs of Faith and Doubt*, 74.

scale of industry, and adopt some lower form of employment. Never more in this world, perhaps, will he be fit for his old business. Now the same thing may happen in the moral and spiritual life. Sin may be pardoned while yet punishment remains. 'Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions'. Moses, for his sin had to lie down in a lonely grave outside the Promised Land, after one look at the country others were entering. David, because of his blood-stained hands, was refused permission to build God's temple. So, like these men, we may shut ourselves out by sin from certain fields of usefulness or enjoyment. There are consequences of sin, bodily and spiritual, effects on the physique, the imagination, the emotions, the capacity for certain kinds of noble activity, which remain with us long after we have become better men. By self-indulgence something in us is burnt out which it is scarcely possible to replace while life lasts. Even after the fetters have been struck off and we are out in the sunshine, it is hard to recover completely the old freedom of movement. If in youth we waste our opportunities, or soil our innocence, or misspend our early powers, or yield habitually to the temptation of deceit, then, whatever happens later—and much may happen—there has been irrecoverable loss already. The young can bring gifts to Christ for which there is no substitute. And besides that, it will always be more difficult to appreciate certain lofty experiences of religion; always there will be some Promised Land we shall never enter here. Not that we may not taste the joys of pardon. Not that God will not save to the uttermost. But the effects of moral evil may sink in so deeply that they leave incapacitating infirmities, and even a Christian man, conscious of the fact in his penitential humility, must go halting all his days because of the evil past.

¶ I had the privilege, some years ago, of visiting Lord —— during an illness he had shortly before his death. He spoke very freely about himself. One day he said:—'I feel quite sure of my salvation, because I am trusting in Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I believe all my sins are atoned for by His precious blood; and I look forward to heaven as my home solely because of His merits and grace. But,' he went on to say, very humbly and sadly, 'when I was a young man I led a wicked life, and the remembrance of my sins then committed haunts me continually. Often, at night, the thought of what I was and of the wrong I did comes over me, and drives sleep away from me.' [1]

3. Once more, our sins come back as *guilty burdens*. Now at this point some might urge an objection. We agreed, they might say, while you spoke about memories and disqualifications; for of course it is useless to deny that *they* are facts. But guilt is another matter. To describe men as guilty is a huge assumption, which stands greatly in need of justification. Is not science teaching us daily that we are simply what parentage and circumstances have made us, shaped by these influences like clay in the potter's hand And in that case what significance can be attached to 'guilt,' save as a conventional symbol which no one understands literally.

All that is true provided only we are quite sure of two things. First, that we have no moral freedom; secondly, that there is no God. To quote a recent book: 'If freedom and responsibility are illusions, the humane and rational thing will be to exhort the gambler who grieves too late over his wife's broken heart not to distress himself over a circumstance for which he is no more answerable than for the state of the weather.' Because he is a danger to society, you may punish a man for crime, just as you would crush a savage beast; but you must not speak of his responsibility. That is the argument; and it never was really believed by anyone, and never will be. We are so made that, without reasoning, we see the falsity of such a view. One does not argue about first principles of conscience.

The other assumption necessary before guilt can be dismissed as non-existent is that there is no God. If there is no God we need have no fear of His condemnation; no, but also we can have no hope of His salvation. If at first

[1] J. W. W. Moeran.

there seems a wonderful relief in having flung overboard traditional ideas about sin and guilt, second thoughts exhibit a loss far outweighing the gain. If there be no one to whom I can turn and say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight,' then the prospect of redemption is gone for ever.

Now the startling thing about this theory of the automaton-like character of man, and hence of the unreality of sin, is that it is continually being refuted, not by argument, but by the personal interposition of God. A man may be living in moral scepticism—whether imbibing it unconsciously or adopting it with deliberation—when all at once a strange thing happens. Suddenly his guilt comes home to him and is acknowledged without a murmur. The cause may be one of a thousand things—the sight of holiness in a friend, someone's death, a whisper of kindness in his sorrow, an autumn sunset, a stray word in a gospel address. After all, the proximate occasion hardly matters; what does matter is the fact that in it, and by means of it, God Himself is speaking. Past all intermediaries and instruments His own voice comes, with its authoritative 'Thou art the man. Guilty *then*, thou art guilty still.'

¶ So effectually had religious faith and hope composed Argyle's spirits that on the very day on which he was to die, he dined with appetite, conversed with gaiety at table, and after his last meal lay down as he was wont, to take a short slumber, in order that his body and mind might be in full vigour when he should mount the scaffold. At this time one of the Lords of the Council, who had probably been bred a Presbyterian, and had been seduced by interest to join in oppressing the Church of which he had once been a member, demanded admittance to the Earl. It was answered that the Earl was asleep. The Privy Councillor thought that this was a subterfuge and insisted on entering. The door of the cell was softly opened, and there lay Argyle on the bed, sleeping in his irons the placid sleep of infancy. The conscience of the renegade smote him. He turned away sick at heart, ran out of the castle and took refuge in the dwelling of a lady of his family. There he flung himself on a couch and gave himself up to an agony of remorse and shame. His kinswoman, alarmed by his looks and groans, begged him to drink a cup of sack. 'No, no,' he said, 'that will do me no good.' She prayed him to tell her what had disturbed him. 'I have been,' he said, 'in Argyle's prison, I have seen him within an hour of eternity sleeping as sweetly as ever man did. But as for me——.'[1]

4. Lastly, our sins come back *as motives to seek God's mercy*. And here at last we light upon the hidden purpose operating in all the other uses God makes of our transgressions. For the most important thing about sin is not its power of embittering memory, or its disqualifying consequences, or even its burden of guilt; the most important thing about sin is this, that it can be forgiven. For there are two wrong ways of regarding sin, levity and despair; the one declaring that forgiveness is unnecessary, the other protesting that forgiveness is impossible, and that we have no choice but to carry our burden to the end without hope or relief. And the one right way is just trustful penitence, just coming back to God, like the lad in the parable, and saying, 'Father, I have sinned, . . . and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' Surely nothing but the loving wisdom of God could have devised such a use for our past transgressions as thus to lead us back, penitent and thankful, by their means to His reconciling mercy.[2]

Out of the gulf into the glory,
  Father, my soul cries out to be lifted.
Dark is the woof of my dismal story,
  Thorough thy sun-warp stormily drifted!—
Out of the gulf into the glory,
Lift me, and save my story.

I have done many things merely shameful;
  I am a man ashamed, my father!
My life is ashamed and broken and blameful—
  The broken and blameful, oh, cleanse and gather!
Heartily shame me, Lord, of the shameful!
To my judge I flee with my blameful.

[1] Lord Macaulay.
[2] H. R. Mackintosh.

Saviour, at peace in thy perfect purity,
  Think what it is, not to be pure!
Strong in thy love's essential security,
  Think upon those who are never secure.
Full fill my soul with the light of thy purity;
Fold me in love's security.

O Father, O Brother, my heart is sore aching!
  Help it to ache as much as is needful;
Is it you cleansing me, mending, remaking,
  Dear potter-hands, so tender and heedful?
Sick of my past, of my own self aching—
Hurt on, dear hands, with your making.

Proud of the form thou hadst given thy vessel,
  Proud of myself, I forgot my donor;
Down in the dust I began to nestle,
  Poured thee no wine, and drank deep of dishonour!
Lord, thou hast broken, thou mendest thy vessel!
In the dust of thy glory I nestle.[1]

Death and After.

Job xiv. 10.—'Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?'

THE plaintive question of Job is one that is always with us. Most other issues in the field of religion we can contrive to ignore—at least for a time—if we so please, but this one obtrudes itself upon us, and we know that sooner or later we shall have to face it personally.

There is a group of statuary, wonderfully vivid and touching in its appeal, named by the artist 'The First Funeral.' One figure, that of a man in robust middle life, is supporting a limp young body, presumably that of a son taken hence in early manhood, while a woman bends forward and gazes on the still features in silent grief; and in the look of the bearer one reads the mute, persistent question men have asked ever since: Is it all over? Is that, then, the very end? The evidence seems so piteously palpable; and still we refuse to accept it as final.

[1] George Macdonald.

1. Is the question of less interest than it used to be? One hears people quote such lines as these:

From too much love of living,
  From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
  Whatever gods there be,
That no life lives for ever,
That dead men rise up never,
That even the weariest river
  Winds somewhere safe to sea.

One hears these lines quoted and remembers them, not because they impress one as true, but because they are so paradoxical, so out of keeping with the feelings of everyday sane people. There is a ring of bravado about them; they strike us, but they don't convince us. They express the views of exceptional individuals, or, at most, moods we have experienced in transient and exceptional moments of severe depression and despondency, when not to be at all—just to stop knowing and feeling for good—seemed the one consummation to be desired. But ordinarily none of us feel like that; and least of all do we feel like it when we think of voices we shall hear no more, of features, once familiar, whose going hence has made all the difference to us. No; the multitude of modern men have not ceased to take an interest in the question of the 'something after death'; but it is nevertheless true that that question presents itself to them differently, and that many are in a state of open or secret doubt concerning it—more often secret than open, an unavowed but very real uneasiness.

2. This uneasiness is mainly the work of modern science. But, whatever modern science, or what such people call modern science, may say or whisper, the supernatural is never far away from us. Men and women rest on it. Our lives touch it, and we feel its contact. Hence we must never be surprised at the cravings, however absurd, which possess men and women to grope after it, and persuade themselves that they do at last recognize it.

¶ The Emperor Julian, he whom we call the Apostate, abandoned Christianity, but his soul found a precarious rest on something very like what we now call Spiritualism; and that shallow theosophy, of which we hear so much, that intellectual playing with worn-out oriental conceptions of strange powers, occult forces, transcendental magic, transmigration theories are all ways in which the soul's craving for a real supernatural avenges itself on those who presume to deny the religious faith which they have been taught and have now abandoned. It is strange but true that this so-called modern science should become a master of ceremonies introducing Mahatmas.[1]

Present-day representatives of physical science have had time to outgrow the rather arrogant tone some of their immediate predecessors in the eighties—the Huxley period—used to take on matters of religion. So distinguished an evolutionist as Professor John Fiske ridiculed the notion that consciousness was merely a function of the brain, as perhaps the most colossal instance of baseless assumption known to the history of philosophy. The same writer gave it as his mature and deliberate opinion that 'in the course of evolution there is no more philosophical difficulty in man's acquiring immortal life than in his acquiring the erect posture and articulate speech.' Science, of course, cannot prove a future life, just as science cannot prove any other future event; but a right interpretation of the lessons of science may help us even in that task, and be found to confirm rather than weaken belief.

According to Sir Oliver Lodge, the whole progress and course of evolution has for its end to increase and intensify the valuable, that which avails or is serviceable for the highest purposes; and so he defines immortality as the persistence of those things which the universe has gained, and which, once acquired, cannot be let go. 'From this point of view,' he says, 'the law of evolution is that good shall on the whole increase in the universe with the progress of the suns: that immortality itself is a special case of a more general law—namely, that in the whole universe nothing really finally perishes that is worth keeping; that a thing once attained is not thrown away.' The soul is simply too valuable to perish; it cannot but endure. Unless the scientific interpretation of the purpose of Nature as seen in evolution is wrong, the soul of man cannot but endure.

3. Endure—but how? Individually and personally, or only as part of the eternal Being of God? Are we to think of ourselves as each being a cupful of water taken from a great ocean, and after death being poured back into the ocean, so that the water itself is not lost, but merged, the soul's individual existence and consciousness of itself gone? Well, let us be quite plain and say that this is not what we mean by immortality at all; this general reabsorption into the Whole—into God, if you like—with a total loss of selfhood, character, consciousness, and the rest, is not what we aspire after; to all intents and purposes it is the same thing as annihilation. Such an immortality is no help whatever to us. But neither is there any reason why we should accept such a theory, which is simply pantheism. The soul is not merely a certain quantity of a certain material, a cupful of water temporarily drawn from an ocean, which may be poured back and nothing lost; a soul is a highly individualized product, so individual as to be unique, and in simply being merged in the whole all that is most valuable in it would be lost and wasted.

¶ As a child I remember being taken to see the porcelain factory at Waldenburg, in Silesia, and of the operations one has remained very vividly in my memory. Quantities of coarse clay shells, having served their purpose of protecting the fine porcelain ware during the process of glazing, were ground down again under heavy, revolving rollers and so reduced to a shapeless mass; but no one in his senses would have treated the graceful vases and finished figures after this fashion. Don't you think we have a parable here? The coarse protecting clay broken up again, merged and mingled with other clay, to be so used and broken a hundred times: the precious

[1] T. M. Lindsay, *College Addresses and Sermons*, 13.

finished product carefully taken from its clay envelope and preserved. The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it. Returns, but not as it came forth from Him, but differentiated, individual, shaped and moulded and coloured; returns, not to be absorbed in the totality of Being, but for still further processes of perfecting and purification.[1]

4. The last point is this: Our Lord never offers any proof of immortality; He assumes it—He is its proof; life to Him was so real that the thought of its ending never occurred to Him. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. He speaks of 'eternal life,' not merely in the sense of life hereafter, but of that which now is—now and for ever. The vital point with Him was that man should not postpone his eternal life until after his own funeral, but begin it here and now. Hence He proclaims and commends the life which is life indeed—the life of service, love, and self-denial. Live it, and we shall know that death cannot touch it. Faith is weakness in proportion as our life is falsely identified by us with things that change and decay; faith rises into certainty in proportion as we live in terms of love—for love is stronger than death.

'Master,' said the lawyer, 'what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus replied, 'How readest thou?' 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . and thy neighbour as thyself,' said the lawyer. 'This do, and thou shalt live,' was Christ's pronouncement. Life is love, and love is life eternal. We may have it, know it, live it—now.

It will not meet us where the shadows fall
  Beside the sea that bounds the Evening Land;
It will not greet us with its first clear call
  When Death has borne us to the farther strand.

It is not something yet to be revealed—
  The everlasting life—'tis here and now;
Passing unseen because our eyes are sealed
  With blindness for the pride upon our brow.
It calls us 'mid the traffic of the street,
  And calls in vain, because our ears are lent
To these poor babblements of praise that cheat
  The soul of heaven's truth, with earth's content.

It dwells not in innumerable years;
  It is the breath of God in timeless things—
The strong, divine persistence that inheres
  In love's red pulses and in faith's white wings.

It is the power whereby low lives aspire
  Unto the doing of a selfless deed,
Unto the slaying of a soft desire,
  In service of the high unworldly creed.

It is the treasure that is ours to hold
  Secure, while all things else are turned to dust;
That priceless and imperishable gold
  Beyond the scathe of robber and of rust.

It is a clarion when the sun is high,
  The touch of greatness in the toil for bread,
The nameless comfort of the Western sky,
  The healing silence where we lay our dead.

And if we feel it not amid our strife,
  In all our toiling and in all our pain—
This rhythmic pulsing of immortal life—
  Then do we work and suffer here in vain.[1]

[1] J. Warschauer.

The Future.

Job xiv. 10.—'Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?'

1. If there is a life beyond, as we believe there is, what is the nature of it? A great change has passed over men's thinking on this subject. If, for example, we turn to the Westminster Confession of Faith, together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, we find that the following are the old beliefs.

(1) First, at death the souls of believers are made perfect in holiness, and received into the highest heaven, where they see the face of God in light and glory, while the souls of the unbelieving are cast into hell, where they re-

[1] P. C. Ainsworth. *Poems and Sonnets*, 9.

main in torment and utter darkness till the resurrection and final judgment.

(2) Second, at death the bodies of the righteous are buried or otherwise disposed of, but they are still united to Christ, and do rest in their graves waiting for their full redemption at the end of the world, while the bodies of the wicked are kept in their graves as their prison till the resurrection and the judgment of the Great Day.

(3) Third, at the resurrection and the final judgment the righteous, being delivered from all sin and misery, enjoy inconceivable happiness in the fellowship of saints, of angels, and of God through all eternity, while those who have been wicked on the earth are punished by the enduring of unspeakable torments of body and soul with the devil and his angels for ever.

2. These beliefs are now greatly modified.

(1) For one thing, the modern beliefs emphasize what Paul has said with regard to the difference between the natural and the spiritual body. Our natural body sees corruption. It was made for the present life, and when that life comes to an end its work is done. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. But the resources of Omnipotence are not exhausted. He will give to us a body as it hath pleased Him. To His children He will give celestial bodies for the terrestrial they have left behind. The old idea that the earthly body, with changes made upon it, is to be raised at the end of the world from the grave in which it has lain from its burial till then is now very generally disbelieved. The spiritual body goes forth with the life, at the moment of death, as the bird goes forth from the broken shell, or the butterfly from the caterpillar's covering, or the traveller from the tent that is wrecked. Doubtless the fullness of the resurrection life does not come till the end, when there are no more graves because there is no more death. But there is no resting in the grave, for either the body or the soul, till the resurrection. In reality there is no death for man, there is only a departure from the earthly frame, which is for ever left behind.

What our outward appearance then will be, we cannot tell. Verily it doth not yet appear even in this respect what we shall be. But we are sure of this, that as our continuity of life will be preserved so also will our personal identity. It is *we* who shall have that after-life, whatever changes there may be upon us. We shall have the power of recognizing others, whatever changes there may be on them. And the memories of earth will tell for good or evil on our after-life.

¶ In this world we recognize our friends by the face, and form of the body. This slowly changes, till at death it utterly disappears in the common dust. In the world to come we shall recognize each other by the soul. Even here there are indications of it. 'That word, that act, was like himself.' [1]

¶ Our mutual recognition in the future state he never doubted; but the only way in which he illustrated it was by an anecdote which he was fond of repeating: 'A pious old couple had been talking of the joys of heaven, and Janet said to her husband, "Do you think, John, we'll know one another in heaven?" John paused, laid down his pipe, and asked in his turn, "Do you think, Janet, we'll be greater fools there than we are here?" ' He never cared to say any more on the subject; this reply always appeared to him to settle the whole question.[2]

(2) It is not surprising that because of this strong realizing of our continuity of life and our personal identity, modern beliefs do not favour the idea of the souls of believers being made *perfect in holiness* when they die. That implies a great change of character at death. It must be borne in mind that perfectness, in the sense of completed progress, is an impossibility for any human or indeed for any finite being. Only God is perfect, in the sense of further progress being impossible. In the case of any created being, in any world in the universe of God, however good that being is, spiritual progress is not only possible, it is necessary. There must be an advance in knowledge, in power, in intensity of love and

[1] J. Ker, *Thoughts for Heart and Life*, 122.
[2] A. Moody Stuart, *Recollections of the late John Duncan, LL.D.*, 123.

zeal and holiness, and so of happiness. There can at best, therefore, be perfectness only in the sense of faultlessness. Thus the stream may be perfectly pure, but its channel may be widened and its waters may be deepened. The tree may be perfectly symmetrical, but it may grow to fuller dimensions and bring forth more abundant fruit. The child may be perfectly formed and proportioned, but it may grow in stature to its full maturity. It is only in this sense of faultlessness that any human being can have perfectness at death. But in the present day there is a growing belief that we carry our individuality with us through the dark valley, with its own imperfections and characteristics, and go on in our after-life with unbroken continuity of character.

(3) Nor can our characters remain without change in eternity any more than in time. Sometimes it is said, indeed, very absurdly, that as the tree lies where it falls, so the departed must remain exactly as they are at death, until the final judgment-day. This verse has no reference to our after-life, and indeed no human being can remain for years, or even for days, the very same. Change is essential to our nature. It may be progress and a rising upwards, it may be retrogression and a falling downwards—but it must be change. When the spirit of goodness guides the life, the change will be for the better; when the spirit of evil guides it, the change will be for the worse. In the former case there will be more of the life of heaven; in the latter case there will be more of the life of hell.

(4) This change of character, whether in time or in eternity, must carry change of condition along with it. Formerly men generally thought of the present life as determining the condition of man for ever. If he lived on earth in unbelief and sin, he must of necessity suffer for ever in hell. His suffering would begin at death, but it would be intensified after the final judgment, when both soul and body would be cast into hell. If men were believers and righteous on earth, they would be rewarded at death by immediately passing into glory; and after the judgment-day, with soul and body glorified, they would be perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity. None but the elect would thus enter into glory, and the elect would consist of believers in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, of persons who before His appearing were instructed and built up in faith in the promised Messiah, and of elect infants and others incapable of being called by the ministry of the Word, but regenerated and saved by Christ through the Holy Spirit, who worketh when and where and how He pleaseth. Now modern belief not only emphasizes the existence and enlarges the number of this last-mentioned class, but it strongly holds that all the members of the human family are objects of the Divine love. The Father of spirits acknowledges as loyal subjects of His Kingdom many who have no connection with the Christian Church. The Son of God gives some saving knowledge of spiritual truth to many who have never heard the Gospel sound; and these, by the working of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, have been enabled in many things to do the will of God.

(5) As there has been a change of belief in regard to the extent, so there has been also in regard to the duration, of the Divine love. The old idea was that God becomes altogether different in His relation to men after their death from what He is before it. Now He is the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness; then He will cease to be merciful and gracious, and long-suffering, and abundant in goodness to the sinner. Now He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; then there will be no space for repentance, though sinners seek it carefully with tears. His decree then is that all who are unjust here shall be unjust for ever, and that all who are filthy here shall continue to be filthy for ever. The modern idea is that the love of the Godhead to sinners is unchanging and everlasting. The Father must for ever seek His children's goodness and happiness. The Son of God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; the Spirit of the Cross is immortal, and therefore it must always be the Son's meat and drink to bring human

children to their heavenly Father. The Holy Spirit also must for ever seek to sanctify spiritual beings and to make their life what God meant and always wishes it to be.

(6) It is also realized now, far more than it used to be, that the after-life of men in heaven will have many of the characteristics of our present life. We are told in Scripture that the Word was in the beginning, that all things were made by Him, and that without Him was not anything made that was made. That Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and it was He who said, 'Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.' It may well be believed, therefore, that that world of glory will be a world as this is, with progress and variety, and work as well as worship. The old idea of heaven, as a kind of Temple in which an unending concert of sacred vocal and instrumental music was to be held, in which angels were to be for ever harping with their harps, and saints were to be for ever singing songs of praise, is now discarded. There is still, however, among some, the belief that the heavenly life will be a life of self-indulgent happiness. The New Jerusalem is thought of as a city nestling among the everlasting mountains, and sheltered there from every storm. There will be no pain, or sorrow, or death, or sin, for its inhabitants; they will all enjoy an everlasting rest. The storms of sin and misery which sweep around the wretched ones beyond its walls die away before they can draw near to those mansions of the blest.

But such a life of inactive happiness would be utterly unworthy of the children of God. For one thing, it would be a life of selfish enjoyment. The true brethren of our Lord cannot be indifferent to the fate of those who are subjected to the fury of disastrous storms; far less can they find happiness in praising God, because 'for the manifestation of His glory He has foreordained these miserable sinners to everlasting death, and, extending and witholding mercy as He pleases, has passed them by for the glory of His sovereign power, and ordained them to dishonour and wrath for their sins, to the praise of His glorious justice!' For another thing, that would be a life of indolent monotony, at best of inactive devotion, utterly unsatisfying to the rational, or the moral, or the emotional part of human nature.

Now man's after-life in heaven is believed to be one of bodily, of intellectual, and of moral activity. When the Bible tells us of man's creation, it tells us that he was placed in the Garden of Eden to keep it and to dress it. He was meant for a life of work. The life of heaven will assuredly not be a life of physical repose, nor will it be a life of mental stagnation. How much there is for man to know of God's works, of God's ways, of God's truth, and of God's children. Now we speak and think and understand as children, then we shall put away childish things. Now we see through a glass darkly, then we shall see face to face. Now we know in part, then we shall know even as we are known. It will be the same with our spiritual and our emotional activities. The highest parts of our nature would be deteriorated if in our after-life there were no exercising of our moral powers and no scope for our affections in a life of active goodness and love. We are told that then we shall enter into the joy of our Lord. We know that the doing of His Father's will, and the helping forward of His brethren's welfare, in a large measure constitute His joy. It is, it always must be, the very joy of Christ to enlighten ignorance, to deliver from sin, to rescue from misery, and to add to the goodness and the happiness of spiritual beings. Wherever in the universe of God there is work to be done for the promotion of goodness, it must be His desire and delight to do that work. Those who dwell in the new heaven and the new earth in which dwell righteousness and love must have His spirit and follow in His steps.[1]

¶ When he could no longer look forward to work on earth, his thought was still of work.

'It is impossible to think,' he wrote to a friend in 1918, 'of any cessation of progress: one can certainly think of the completion of certain stages of development. But then, each goal reached seems somehow to be the starting

[1] W. H. Gray, *Old Creeds and New Beliefs*, 212ff.

point for another and larger goal to attain. . . . Life Eternal, then, is to be conceived of as a life of endless purposeful activity. It is only the limitations of our present body that could make us feel tired at the thought of ceaseless occupation.'[1]

The Immortality of Fellowship.

Job xiv. 14.—'If a man die, shall he live again?'
John xiv. 19.—'Because I live, ye shall live also.'

In many pagan religions the conception of the future life filled a great space; in some it absorbed the attention of the worshippers to the exclusion of everything else. Why was it, then, that both natural religion and speculative philosophy proved ineffective in their treatment of the future and of man's relation to it? Why do we prize even the Old Testament, in which the hope of immortality, to say the least, is so inconspicuous, above other religious authorities in which it figures so much more prominently? The reason is plain. These religions and philosophies failed because they lacked the one thing from which faith in immortality could securely and healthily spring—a true conception of God, and of man and his relation to God. It is quite true to say that Israel had hardly any ideas about the future, and shrank in horror from those it had; but Israel had God, and that was everything. Israel knew that there was One only, the living and true God, from everlasting to everlasting, infinite in goodness and truth. Israel knew that God had made man in His own image, capable of communion with Him, and blest only in such communion. To Israel, to see good was all one with to see God; with God was the fountain of life, in God's light His people saw light. This faith in God was greater than Israel knew; it could not be explored and exhausted in a day; it had treasures stored up in it that only centuries of experience could disclose, and among them was the hope of immortality. The believing nation of Israel, like Bunyan's pilgrim, unconsciously carried the key of promise in its bosom, even when it was in the dungeon of Giant Despair.

1. The great passages in the Old Testament in which the hope emerges come upon us suddenly, as the finding of the key came upon the pilgrim. This passage in Job is one. The tried man is in the very extremity of his distress. He feels—for so he interprets his distress—that God for some reason is angry with him, and that His anger will endure till he dies. His disease is mortal, and will carry him to his grave. But is that all? Job finds his faith in God come to his relief. For God is righteous, the Vindicator of righteousness, and it is not possible for Him to abandon a righteous man as Job would be abandoned if his death ended all. The idea comes to Job, through his faith in God, that Sheol may not be the final outlook, and he puts it into the pathetic prayer: 'Oh that thou wouldest hide me in Sheol, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!' How patient such a prospect would make the suffering man. How uncomplainingly he would face the dreary underworld if he knew that it was only a temporary interruption to his communion with God. 'All the days of my warfare would I wait, till my release should come. Thou shouldest call, and I would answer thee: Thou wouldest have a desire to the work of thine hands.' This is only the yearning of the soul, its faint anticipation, born of faith, of what might be; but in a later passage we see it flame up triumphantly, though it is but for a moment. 'I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth: and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another. My reins are consumed within me'—that is, I faint with longing for that great vindication. Both in Egypt and in Greece faith in immortality, such as it was, rested simply on conceptions of man's nature; here, as everywhere in revealed religion, it rests on the character of God. He is the eternal Righteousness, and His faith is pledged to

[1] *A Memoir of Malcolm Archibald*, 5.

man, whom He calls to live in fellowship with Himself. All things may seem to be against man; his friends may desert him, circumstances may accuse him; but if he is righteous God cannot desert him, and if he must die under a cloud even death will not prevent his vindication. His Redeemer lives, and one day he shall again see God. And to see God is to have life, in the only sense which is adequate to the Bible use of the word.

In the Book of Psalms we have the same type of conviction presented from another point of view. The psalmists write, as a rule, as men in the actual enjoyment of communion with God. Their life is not merely human, it is Divine as well. The fountain of it is with God. God Himself is their refuge and their portion; as one of them says, they have no good beyond Him. In their experience the Divine and the human interpenetrate each other: they see and enjoy God. Perhaps it is one consequence of this intense consciousness of God's presence and grace that they think so little about the future. Having God, they have everything, and no time, past, present, or to come, can make any difference to them. But sometimes they do deliberately face the thought of death, and then we see their faith shine out. What has death to do with such a life as theirs? Is death stronger than God? If He holds us, can it pluck us out of His hand? Never. The Old Testament saints, in the sublime hours of their faith, had a sublime sense of their eternal security with God. 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.' 'God will redeem my soul from the hand of Sheol: for he shall receive me.' 'Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol: neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life'—athwart that pathless gulf; 'in thy presence is fulness of joy; in thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.' Nay, we even find words of triumph over the last enemy which the New Testament in its loftiest mood can only borrow: 'I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction?' It was along this line of religious experience, inspired by faith in the living, true, holy, and gracious God, that the true hope of immortality entered the world.

2. It would have been natural once to pass from the Old Testament to the New almost without the consciousness of interruption, but this is hardly permissible now. When we consider the two in reference to the subject before us, it is obvious that in the New Testament the faith in immortality has new features. In particular, it has become quite definitely a faith in the resurrection. The growth of this peculiar form of the belief in immortality has been laboriously investigated, but not with entire success. The sacred books of the Persians, who certainly believed in some kind of resurrection, have been diligently explored, and many who know that the religion of Israel received no impulse from Egyptian ideas of the future suppose that it was strongly influenced by contact with Zoroastrianism. But the real fountain of the hope in immortality has already been indicated, and when we look at the resurrection as it appears in Zoroastrianism and in Jewish apocalyptic literature on the one hand, and in the New Testament on the other, it is not more the similarity than the contrast by which we are impressed. In these other books we are in a world of lawless fantasy, where anything is said of the future because nothing is known; in the New Testament we are on the same ground of historical fact and religious experience which is characteristic of the Old.

Christians believe in their own resurrection to eternal life, because they believe in the resurrection of Christ. But faith does not depend upon—it does not originate in nor is it maintained by—the resurrection of Christ simply as an historical fact. The resurrection of Jesus is not simply a fact outside of us, guaranteeing in some mysterious way our resurrection in some remote future. It is a present power in the believer. He can say with St. Paul: Christ liveth in me—the risen Christ—the Conqueror of death—and a part, therefore, is ensured to me in His life and immortality. This is the great idea of the New Testament whenever the future life is in

view. It is indeed very variously expressed. Sometimes it is 'Christ in us, the hope of glory.' Sometimes it is specially connected with the possession, or rather the indwelling, of the Holy Spirit. 'If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you.' It is easy to see that the religious attitude here is precisely what it was in the Old Testament, though, as the revelation is fuller, the faith which apprehends it, and the hope which grows out of it, are richer. Just as union with God guaranteed to the Psalmist a life that would never end, so union with the risen Saviour guaranteed to the Apostles, and guarantees to us, the resurrection triumph over death. Here is a faith in immortality which is moral and spiritual through and through—which rests upon a supreme revelation of what God has done for man—which involves a present life in fellowship with the risen Saviour—which is neither worldly nor other worldly, but eternal—which has propagated itself through all ages and in all nations—which in Jesus Christ invites all men to become sharers in it—which is the present, living, governing faith of believing men and women in proportion as they realize their union with the Saviour: a faith infinite in its power to console and inspire: a faith not always easy to hold, but demanding for its retention that effort and strain in which St. Paul strove to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death, if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead. And all this, which fills the Epistles of the New Testament, goes back to the words of Jesus himself: 'Abide in me, and I in you'; and 'Because I live, ye shall live also.'[1]

I know
There is no death, 'tis but a phantom fear
That haunts the soul apart from God.
Christ rose.
The stone was rolled away, and echoing,
His voice startled Death's sentry guards.
'Behold,
I live for ever, and have cast the keys
Of Hell into the bottomless abyss.'
Lift up your heads, ye golden gates, for all
To enter in who will to walk the Way.
Christ lives, and round the living Christ new worlds
Burn to their birth in light, new triumph songs
Make music mid the silent stars, and swell,
Like ocean's thunder on a sounding shore,
Life! Life! More Life! Christ lives for evermore.[1]

[1] J. Denney.

The Certainty of Immortality.

Job xiv. 14.—'If a man die, shall he live again?'

1. Carlyle says that religion should be the most certain of all our certainties. Yet there are religious teachers who tell us that on the question of a life beyond the grave there can be no certainty. And they are glad of it. Says one: 'So far from this attitude of uncertainty being an unwelcome necessity to which our inevitable ignorance consigns us, it is to my thinking pre-eminently religious. One of the essentials of religion is trust—a trust which, laying hold of the fundamental goodness of the Eternal, projects faith beyond the limits of sight, rests content to cheerfully face one's present duty while ignorant of some of the details in the economy of God, because of the abiding assurance that in His own good way and time all will be well.'

'Give me some definite pledge respecting the details of the life beyond the grave, or I falter and faint,' says that miscalled faith which is the very soul of doubt. 'I cannot walk at all, unless I walk by sight.' 'The future, Father, be in thy mind, as it is in thy hand,' says that miscalled doubt which is the very soul of faith. 'But teach me the task of to-day, and for the outcome of my efforts, I cheerfully await the slow development of thy eternal purpose.'

I only know
My present duty, and my Lord's command

[1] G. A. Studdert-Kennedy, *Songs of Faith and Doubt*, 29.

To occupy till he comes. So at the post
Where he hath set me in his providence
I choose for one to meet him face to face,
No faithless servant, frightened from my task,
But ready when the Lord of the harvest calls;
And therefore with all reverence, I would say,
Let God do his work, we will see to ours.
Bring in the candles.

Would that we might attain a faith grounded in reason, indeed, and so thoroughly grounded that we shall cease to feverishly covet a knowledge not required for the labours of to-day; a faith that shall even count it a privilege to trust to the eternal Trustworthiness those details of life and death which we do not need to know.

The fool asks 'With what flesh? in joy or pain?
Helped or unhelped? and lonely, or again
Surrounded by our earthly friends?'
I know not, and glory that I do
Not know; that for eternity's great ends
God counted me as worthy of such trust
That I need not be told.

2. Now, that immortality is of faith is undoubted. But faith is not doubt. It is certainty. Some things are necessary for faith to feed upon; then it brings the assurance on which life is lived and death is died fearlessly. What are these things?

(1) The first is that *man is a moral being.* That is what differentiates him from the brute creation and constitutes him a man—he is a moral being. He is subject to moral law; he feels the constraint of duty; he is ruled by moral ideals. Now when once this is admitted, 'Man is,' as Professor Seth says, 'constituted heir of immortality.' For the moral law, which is the law of man's true being, does not belong to this world of time and sense. It issues from a world beyond 'our bourne of Time and Place,' from a sphere 'where time and space are not.' We can account for all the actions of the animal's life without going beyond the region of the finite, but the roots of man's life stretch out into the unseen and the eternal. Man is not the servant of his appetites and instincts; he obeys a higher law—the 'thou shalt' of duty; and the very idea of duty carries us outside this time life. Duty, as Wordsworth put it, is the 'daughter of the voice of God.' So that, to quote Professor Seth again, 'Man is, as such, an eternal being; he not only can, but must, transcend time in every act of his moral life.' But that very fact, that the moral law which man is constrained to obey belongs to a sphere beyond 'our bourne of Time and Place,' surely suggests that it is to that supersensible and eternal sphere and not to this world of time and space that man himself really belongs. The fact that he is compelled to live as an immortal being is surely a proof that he is himself immortal.

And an immortal being needs time and space. Even a great saint like St. Paul has to cry, 'Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect.' Unless, then, the infinite demand of the moral law is to be written down as an illusion and a mockery, man needs infinite time to fulfil it. And it is just because, deep down in their hearts, men have been sure of this 'infinite time' that they have addressed themselves to tasks that they knew they could never in their earthly life accomplish, and have set ideals before themselves to which they knew they could not attain within the limits of their mortal years. That is the great truth which Browning teaches in his *Grammarian's Funeral.* There he depicts a scholar, 'dead from the waist down,' toiling at an infinite task with the fine leisure which comes from knowing he has all eternity to work in:

Others mistrust and say, 'But time escapes:
Live now or never!'
He said, 'What's time? Leave Now for dogs
and apes!
Man has Forever.'
. . . . . .
Was it not great? did not he throw on God,
(He loves the burthen)—
God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen?

It is with the same splendid assurance that Tennyson's *In Memoriam* ends. *In Memoriam* is the argument of the soul against death. It

was impossible, the poet argues, that the promise and hope of Arthur Hallam's youth should have been finally quenched. It was impossible that their deep love for one another should have been called into being only to be mocked by death. The great ideals of Hallam himself, the great love that bound Hallam and Tennyson together, were both prophetic of immortality. They demanded eternity in order to fulfil themselves. So Tennyson ends his poem with lines expressive of his certainty that his friend still lived:

Dear heavenly friend, that canst not die,
Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine.

. . . . . .

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

(2) The second thing is *the nature of God.* Plato based his hopes of a future life on what he knew of human nature; the saints of the Old Testament who attained to a clear and unhesitating hope of a Beyond based that hope on what they knew of the character of God. They did not argue, 'Because man is what he is, he must be immortal'; their argument ran thus, 'Because God is what He is, He will never allow man to perish.'

The special point to which the argument for immortality attaches itself is God's willingness to enter into direct and personal relationship with individuals. He condescends to love men and to call them His friends. That is what religion means; it means God and man entering into fellowship, spirit meeting with spirit, the love of man responding to the great love of God, God and man becoming friends. This communion, this friendship, this interchange of love is no mere fancy, but a great and blessed fact of experience. Multitudes of men have entered into such a holy, sacred, intimate fellowship with God. Enoch 'walked with God.' Abraham was called 'the friend of God.' David was a man 'after God's own heart.' Our Lord again and again insisted upon the reality of this relationship between God and the individual. He emphasized God's condescending love and care. He declared that God counted the very hairs of our head. He talked about the Shepherd knowing His sheep by name. The friendship is not all on one side. It is not a case simply of our making a friend of God; it is a case of God making us His friends. It is not a case simply of our love going forth toward God; it is a case of God's love flowing forth toward us. Now the question all this suggests is this. Can death put an end to this holy intimacy? Can the grave rob God of His friends? Is a coffin to be the finish of this holy and blessed fellowship? Have we been called upon to love God and to walk with God and to live with God, and is 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust' to be the end of it all? It is absolutely unthinkable. To admit the possibility of it is to sacrifice God's character. It is unthinkable that God should call men into His friendship and evoke their love and then cast them 'as rubbish to the void.' God's love is an uttermost and unchanging love. When God loves, He loves for ever. Death can never snatch men from that love. If it could, death would prove itself mightier than God Himself. The mere fact that God makes us His friends is a sure pledge of immortality. That relation of friendship is one which death cannot sever. Abraham during his lifetime was a 'friend of God.' God never let His friend go. 'I *am* the God of Abraham.' Through death and into the beyond that happy relationship had persisted. The friendship had never been interrupted. The relationship was not a past but a present one. 'I *am* the God of Abraham.'

(3) The third thing is *the experience of Christ.* This is the most conclusive argument of all, for when we come to deal with the experience of Christ we are out of the region of inference, and in the region of historic fact. What happened to Jesus was this—He really died and really came to life again. Or as He Himself expresses it in His letters to the churches: 'I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore.' The resurrection of Jesus is not dream or fancy. It is not the product of some heated imagination; it is not the result of some visions which ecstatic and half-hysterical disciples beheld. It is sober,

historic fact—as much so as the fact of Crucifixion. Jesus died and Jesus came to life again. And in the resurrection-experience of our Lord we have the final and satisfying proof of the life beyond. For, according to the teaching of St. Paul in that great fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, the experience of Jesus was no unique and solitary experience. It was a representative experience. Christ was in a profound sense the normal man, and what happened to Him is typical of what is to happen to us all. He is 'the firstfruits of them that slept.'

¶ It is the resurrection of Jesus that converts promise into fact, and hope into assurance. Men argued for years about the possibility of there being a new world out yonder towards the West. They set forth various reasons for believing there was such a world. But what forever settled the matter and made the New World not a guess or a theory or a speculation was Columbus's experience. Columbus sailed out towards the sunset until he discovered land. Then coming back, he was able to say, 'There is a land out yonder; I have been there.' Jesus is our Columbus. When it came to the Westering sun with them, men wondered what lay beyond the sunset—whether there was anything at all, or only the black night. But we wonder now no more. We know. For Jesus has travelled beyond the sunset, and He has come back to say that beyond the grave and gate of death,

> There is a land of pure delight,
> Where saints immortal reign;
> Infinite day excludes the night,
> And pleasures banish pain.[1]

There is nothing that would affect our age more gloriously than a deeper resignation and a more triumphant hope in the death-chamber and at the open grave. God forbid that we who bear the name of Christ should sorrow as those who have no hope! In moments of lofty inspiration we are human, and feel with the poet:

> Ah, Christ, that it were best
> For one short hour to see
> The souls we loved, that they might tell us
> What and where they be.

But though we see not our dear departed ones, we know that they are for ever with the Lord, and that in God's good time we shall join them.

> I go to prove my soul!
> I see my way as birds their trackless way.
> I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
> I ask not: but unless God sends his hail
> Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
> In some time, his good time, I shall arrive:
> He guides me and the bird. In his good time!

¶ A little girl had been accustomed always to bid her father good-night in the same words. She was an only child, and loved as only children are. She used to say, 'Good-night, I shall see you again in the morning.' The time came when death's bright angel—bright to those who go, dark to those who stay—summoned her to heaven. In her last moments she called her father to her side, and putting up her little arms, she clasped them around his neck, whispering with her rapidly dying strength, 'Good-night, dear father, I shall see you again in the morning.' She was right, as the child always is right about the highest things. 'Sorrow endureth for a night; joy cometh in the morning.'[1]

3. But this consciousness through the activities of the soul that our real home lies elsewhere will not lead us to ignore the duties that belong to our pilgrimage. No one will ever be able to accuse us of the selfishness of other-worldliness. Immortality does not exclude this life but rather takes it up into a higher sphere where the plain duties become idealized. For love is ever an essential characteristic of the faith that takes in the world beyond. We cannot think of our life here except in close connexion with life there. And so the best men and women the world has known have been those who are sure that they will live again. The very fact that they were

[1] J. D. Jones.

[1] R. J. Campbell.

sojourners only made them the more anxious to use their time well. The heroes of the Old Testament such as Abraham, Samuel and Isaiah, and of the New such as St. Paul, St. Peter and St. John, of the ancient Church such as Chrysostom, Augustine and Gregory, of the Church of our own day such as Wilberforce, Maurice and Shaftesbury, prove that they who definitely set their affections on things above are always the truest lovers of humanity.

¶ Amongst the many who have shown the most remarkable political sagacity with the greatest spiritual devotion, the shrewdest judgment of men and affairs with the most intense love of God was William Penn, the largest landowner in the world of his day. In that difficult seventeenth century he made the best experiment of his time. The large State of Pennsylvania he governed with singular power—granting toleration to all in an intolerant age, the fullest liberty to everyone when liberty was hardly known, and perfect justice to the natives when they were considered hardly human. William Penn was two hundred years before his time because his soul was alive.

The secret of his life is best revealed in his own words:

'Death being the way and condition of Life, we cannot love to live if we cannot bear to die.

I have often wondered at the unaccountableness of man in this, among other things; that though he loves change so well, he should care so little to hear or think of his last, great and best change too, if he pleases. The truest end of Life is to know the Life that never ends.

He that lives to live ever never fears dying. Nor can the means be terrible to him that heartily believes the end.

For though Death be a Dark Passage, it leads to Immortality, and that's Recompense enough for suffering of it.'[1]

[1] G. H. S. Walpole.

The Work of His Hands.

Job xiv. 15.—'Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.'

1. That is to say, God takes pleasure in His work and sees that it is well done. The first chapter of the Bible reveals to us this characteristic of the Almighty. It shows Him to us as profoundly interested in His work of creation, as going on with it unweariedly day after day, unfolding more and more of the fullness and beauty of His plan, until on the seventh day He finished it, and rested, and, surveying all that He had made, saw that it was very good. He regarded the completion of His work with the satisfaction which a consummate artist finds in the exercise and achievements of his genius. He who fainteth not, neither is weary, rested not because He was tired in or of His work, or because He had exhausted His power and skill, but because He had realized His conception and intention, found the result to be very good, and experienced a perfect joy in His perfect creation. Indeed, only God can view with perfect satisfaction the completion of the work of His hands. For, however desirous he be of perfecting his work, man invariably feels when it is finished how far short it has come of his own conception. He is filled with a sense of failure and disappointment even when his fellow-men are loudest in their praise of his achievement. It is recorded of Thorwaldsen, that when he finished his wonderfully beautiful statue of Hope he was overwhelmed with melancholy; and, when asked the reason, he touchingly replied, 'My genius is decaying, for this is the first of my works that I have been satisfied with. Hitherto my idea has been far beyond what I could execute. But it is no longer so; I shall never have a great idea again.'

We see the desire which God has to the work of His hands in the wonderful perfection with which everything in creation is finished. The atom, which is the smallest known particle of matter, and is at the lowest foundation of visible things, is said to be 'a manufactured article,' having the finger of God clearly seen

in its construction. The cell, which is the elementary form of life, is a most complicated object, full of beauty and contrivance. Examine a minute seed, and you will find that it has the most exquisite patterns; or the pollen-dust by which a flower is fertilized, and you will see that it has on it some lovely design different in each species; or the mealy powder on the wings of a moth, and you will find it to consist of the most delicate fairy feathers. How wonderfully is the snowflake formed, and the honey cell of the bee, and the sting of the nettle, and the eye of the insect! There is nothing in Nature that is not finished to the highest perfection of which it is capable—the perfection of the utmost minuteness and detail. The hall-mark of its Maker is impressed upon every object.

2. It is upon God's desire to the work of His hands that our hope of salvation depends. Jesus Christ, in every soul that believes in Him, is the beginning of the new creation of God. And we know that He who is the Author is also the Finisher of our faith. As the Apostle says, 'We are confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in us will perform it unto the day of Christ.' He who uttered these inspiring words rested his confidence, not upon man's power of perseverance in goodness, but upon God's faithfulness and unchanging purpose of love. He looked away from all that could be effected by the varying moods of man to the wondrous persistency of Divine grace, which would never abandon its own design or give up the souls it had once saved. And even if we murmur against Him and refuse to enter into sympathy with His purpose; if we, in our dark moods, believe not, and resist His Spirit, we cannot alter His eternal nature. He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself. The husbandman has long patience in watching the growth of the seed he has sown, through winter's storms and summer's heat, till the harvest rewards him. And so God, the great Husbandman of souls, has far greater patience in watching and fostering the seed of eternal life He has planted in our souls, until it has produced the blade and the ear, and the full corn in the ear.

¶ I believe that love and righteousness and justice in God mean exactly the same thing, namely, a desire to bring His whole moral creation into a participation of His own character and His own blessedness. He has made us capable of this, and He will not cease from using the best means for accomplishing it in us all. . . . He who waited so long for the formation of a piece of old red sandstone will surely wait with much long-suffering for the perfecting of a human spirit.[1]

3. But across God's purpose of grace comes the ever-present, ever-perplexing mystery of death. Job asks the old question that has weighed heavily upon all the ages: 'If a man die, shall he live again?' Death is an end that seems to make all God's work vain; and man's life seems to be no better than the statue moulded by Michael Angelo in snow, which speedily melted into the viewless air. But Job answers his own question in the affirmative, by his knowledge of God's faithfulness to His own purposes. He reasons that if other workmen have a desire to finish and perfect their work, God, the great Master-Worker, must surely have a desire to bring His masterpiece, man, to the highest perfection of which it is capable. Having made man, He cannot allow the grave to be the end of his life; for the grave, in such a case, would be the utter ending of His work while it was yet confessedly unfinished. That is the argument of Job; and while we can discern in it some fear and dubiety, born of the ages before life and immortality were brought to light in the gospel, we can also recognize in it a jubilant note of gladness, like the dawn of the day-spring from on high illuminating the tomb.

¶ I remember an inscription which I saw in the Catacombs of Rome, in which a Christian visitor to the tomb of his dead wife records his fear and hope: 'O Sophronia, dear Sophronia, thou mayest live; thou *shalt* live.'[2]

Thou shalt call,
And I, O God, my God, will answer Thee!
Thou wilt desire the work of Thine own hands,

[1] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, 242.
[2] H. Macmillan.

And in the day of Thy desire for me
I, by the Life eternal still within
Responsive unto Thee—at last unbound
From chains of death and from the gloomy grave—
In Thine own likeness perfected shall rise
Into Thine unveiled Presence:
O my God,
As one who passes into quiet sleep,
And knows that some dear voice shall waken him
At dawn of day, so, as I journey on
Toward the silence and the loneliness,
I know that if the sleep of death be mine
Thus shall I also pass into the dark,
To wait in joyfulness and certain hope
The call that in the dawn shall waken me.[1]

The Water and the Stones.

Job xiv. 19.—'The waters wear the stones.'

Who has not looked on a mountain? Green in Ireland, bare and rugged in Wales, masked by larch and fir on the sides as in Scotland, white and glistening with eternal snow as an alp. They have not perceptibly changed in the records of human life. They are called Nature's monuments, and have seen the rise and fall of nations, the passing away of generations of the sons of men. And yet it is the simplest science to see in the runnels of a ploughed field, in the channels of a chalk road, in the ceaseless beat of the sea's tidal pulse, and the wear of the cliff, the playing of the forces which wear the stones, remove the rock out of its place, and wash away the things that grow out of the dust of the earth. The perched boulder of the ice age, the smooth surface where once a glacier flowed, the deep valleys which rivers, as they wear away their banks, make, everything that a trained eye can see, and ought to see, are evidences that the waters wear the stones.[2]

It is a titanic struggle, and the waters win. That is the extraordinary thing—the waters win. The water seems so soft, so yielding, so fluid, and the rocks seem so impregnable, so adamantine, so immutable. Yet the waters always win. The land makes no impression on the sea; but the sea grinds the land to powder. The sea is often spoken of as the natural emblem of all that is fickle and changeful; but it is a pure illusion. There are, of course, superficial variations of tone and tint and temper; but, as compared with the kaleidoscopic changes that overtake the land, the ocean is eternally and everywhere the same. It, and not the rocks, is the symbol of immutability. 'Look at the sea!' exclaims Max Pemberton, in *Red Morn.* 'How I love it! I like to think that those great rolling waves will go leaping by a thousand years from now. There is never any change about the sea. You never come back to it and say, 'How it's changed!' or 'Who's been building here?' or 'Where's the old place I loved?' No; it is always the same. I suppose if one stood here for a million years the sea would not be different. You're quite sure of it, and 'it never disappoints you.' The land, on the contrary, is for ever changing. Man is always working his transformations, and Nature is toiling to the same end.

'When the Romans came to England,' says Frank Buckland, the naturalist, 'Julius Cæsar probably looked upon an outline of cliff very different from that which holds our gaze to-day. First there comes a sun-crack along the edge of the cliff; the rain-water gets into the crack; then comes the frost. The rain-water in freezing expands, and by degrees wedges off a great slice of chalk cliff; down this tumbles into the water; and Neptune sets his great waves to work to tidy up the mess.' No man can know the veriest rudiments of geology without recognizing that it is the land, and not the sea, that is constantly changing.

We may visit some historic battle-field to-day, and, finding it a network of bustling streets and crowded alleys, may hopelessly fail to repeople the scene with the battalions that wheeled and charged, wavered and rallied, there in the brave days of old. But when, from the deck of a steamer, I surveyed the blue and tossing waters of Cape Trafalgar, I knew that I was gazing upon the scene just as it presented itself to the eye of Nelson on the

[1] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Songs*, 58.
[2] W. Dale.

day of his immortal victory and glorious death more than a century ago.

1. Now, beneath this triumph of the ocean—the triumph that leaves the land in fragments whilst the sea itself sustains no injury—there lies a deeper significance than at first appears. Job saw it. No elusive secret, lurking in the universe around him, escaped his restless eye. 'The waters wear the stones!' he cried, and it was a shout of victory that rose from his heart when he said it. 'The waters wear the stones,' he exclaimed, 'and thou washest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth.' It is the death-knell of the material. It is the triumph of the eternal. A little child looks upon the great granite cliffs, and it seems impossible that the lapping waves can ever pound them to pieces. But they do. And in the same way, Job says, man seems so impregnable, and the world so mighty, that it appears a thing incredible that God can finally prevail. But He shall. The quiet waters conquer the frowning cliffs at length. The walls of Jericho fall down. This is the victory that overcometh the world.

'The waters wear the stones.' That was the heartening message that gave to Spain one of her very greatest teachers. St. Isidore of Seville was only a boy at the time. He found his lessons hard to learn. Study was a drudgery, and he was tempted to give up. The huge obstacles against which he, like the waves at the base of the cliff, was beating out his life seemed adamantine. So he ran away from school. But in the heat of the day he sat down to rest beside a little spring that trickled over a rock. He noticed that the water fell in drops, and only one drop at a time; yet those drops had worn away a large stone. It reminded him of the tasks he had forsaken, and he returned to his desk. Diligent application overcame his dullness, and made him one of the first scholars of his time. He never forgets the drops of water, dripping, dripping, dripping on the rock that they were conquering. 'Those drops of water,' says his biographer, 'gave to Spain a brilliant historian, and to the Church a famous doctor.'

2. It is always the gentle things of life that conquer us. 'The moving waters'—to quote Keats' beautiful phrase—

> The moving waters at their priest-like task
> Of pure ablution round earth's human shores

wear down the towering cliffs along the coast. It is Æsop's fable of the North Wind and the Sun over again. The North Wind, with its violence and bluster, only makes the traveller button his coat the tighter. It is the genial warmth of the sun that makes him take it off. It is always by gentleness that the adamantine world is mastered. That is one of life's most lovely secrets. We are not ruled as much as we think by parliaments and commandments and enactments. The proportion of our lives that is governed by such things is very small. But the proportion that is dominated by gentler and more winsome forces is very great. The voices that sway us with a regal authority are soft and tender voices, the voices of those whose genial goodness compels us to love them. The imperial tones to which we capitulate unconditionally are very rarely stern official tones. Life's loftiest authorities never derive their sanctions from rank, office, or station. The soul has enthronements and coronations of its own. A little child often leads it. A Carpenter becomes its king. Out of Nazareth comes the Conqueror of the World. The pure and cleansing waters wear down the giant crags at the last.[1]

A Consoling God.

Job xv. 11.—'Are the consolations of God small with thee (RV 'too small for thee') ?'

Two striking suggestions have been made about sorrow. The first is that it marks a real era in life when a man begins to feel that he needs comforting at all. In the early morning of our fresh and indefatigable energies it is not rest, or peace, or healing that we care for, so much as an opening to give us the chance of showing what we are fit for. It is the first breakdown, whether in bodily health, or in the companionships that make home

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Faces in the Fire*, 39ff.

lovely and desirable, or in the favour of our fellow-men, or in our own capacity and self-respect, that brings a darkness over our sky and checks us in our headlong speed, and keenly humbles us, and impels us to plead for the sympathy of men and the kindness of God. The second suggestion is that there is no truer test of a man's spiritual condition than the sort of remedy which gives him comfort. Some think of their money. Some plunge into diversion and business. Some forget their trouble in incessant distraction. Some, not too many, flee in their distress to God.

Now with most of us the consolations of God are small when they might be, are meant to be, large. For even when a man has no wish to harden himself in his grief, yet, though he may be content to be helped by man, he may refuse to be comforted by God. There is sometimes a resentment within him, a sense of inequitableness and wrong, which tempts him to hard thoughts of One who, he always thought, called Himself Father, but who is putting him to intolerable anguish without sufficient cause. We all of us know something of this feeling. Even if it passes, it visits us. With some it lingers, by others it is instantly rejected as an injury and a dishonour. Some never escape from it till they die.

What are the consolations of God?

1. First of all, God is the Consoler of man by the very fact of His *existence*. There is a class of passages in the Bible, mysteriously beautiful, which appear to rest the peace of the human soul upon the mere fact of the existence of the larger life of God. Such is that verse of the forty-sixth Psalm, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' 'Thou shalt know that I, the Lord, am' is the noble promise that comes again and again, full of reassurance. And when God's people, trampled, bruised, broken, trodden in the dust in Egypt, asked by Moses for the name of the God who had promised them His deliverance, it was a mere assertion of the awful and supreme existence that was given in reply: 'I AM hath sent me.' It is because God is that man is bidden to be at peace. And this is not hard to understand. If anybody has ever felt that his life, with its woes, was easier to bear because there were great men living the same human life with him, he can understand it perfectly. The men of larger life of whom he knew never came near him, never touched his life, never spoke to him, perhaps never knew of his existence. It may be they were merely men whose lives he had read in books. For here is one of the greatest uses of really great history and biography—their peace-giving and consoling power. It was not what the great men of the world had done. It was simply that they had existed.

Indeed the power of mere activity is often overrated. It is not what the best men do, but what they are, that constitutes their truest benefaction to their fellow-men. Certainly, in our own little sphere, it is not the most active people to whom we owe the most. It is the lives, which, like the stars, simply pour down on us the calm light of their bright and faithful being, up to which we look, and out of which we gather the deepest calm and courage. There is reassurance here for many of us who seem to have no chance for active usefulness. We can do nothing for our fellow-men. But it is good to know that we can be something for them; to know that no man or woman of the humblest sort can really be strong, gentle, pure, and good, without the world being better for it, without somebody being helped and comforted by the very existence of that goodness.

¶ He achieved professional success, he made money, he secured advancement, but these things were not the true harvest of his life. He won something which he accounted of greater value. Dr. John Kelman, who knew him well, wrote to him on one occasion words which are a remarkable testimony: 'There is no man to whom I owe strengthening and guidance of spirit as much as to yourself. Every touch of you is to me what the "little touch of Harry in the night" was to the soldiers before Agincourt.' A stranger, after listening to one of his speeches in South Africa, was moved to open his heart and reveal to him in a remarkable letter the secret wounds and sorrows of his life. He felt it

brought relief and strength to unburden his soul to such a man.[1]

2. But what comes next? The *sympathy* of this same God whose existence is already real to us. It becomes known to us not merely that He is, but that He cares for us. Not merely His life, but His love, becomes a fact. Surely this is a great step forward. We had to convince ourselves, perhaps, that there was not something cold and distant in the thought of the Divine existence as a source of human consolation. But here there can be no doubt. Anyone will say, 'If I could only be sure that He, the God of all things, really cares for me; that when any sorrow comes to me it strikes right at His heart, and He is sorry too—if I could be sure of this, I do not know of anything I could not bear. What is there that I could not tolerate? Nay, what is there that I would not almost welcome, if I could by any violence break open a way by which God could come down to me and show me that Perfect Nature as my Friend, my Helper, thoughtful for my welfare and my woe?'

Nor is this all mere selfishness. The real reason why the sufferer rejoices in the sympathy of God is that thereby, through love, that dear and Perfect Nature is made completely known to him. Love is the translating medium. Through this special love for him the absolute and everlasting Deity has been made known to him. Through God's sympathy he knows God more intensely and more nearly, and so all the consolations of God's being have become more real to him.

How do we learn of such a sympathy of God? How can we really come to believe that He knows our individual troubles, and sorrows for them with us? This is a hard question for a great many people. The magnitude of the world, the multitude of souls that God has made, perplexes many hearts, and makes it very hard for them to believe in personal, individual sympathy and care. The bigness of the world—the millions upon millions of needy souls—makes it hard for men to believe in the discriminating care and personal love of God for each. The Jew, shut up in his little nation, found it easier. In such perplexity what shall we do?

In the first place, we must give free and bold play to those instincts of the heart which believe that the Creator must care for the creatures He has made, and that the only real effective care for them must be that which takes each of them into His love, and knowing it separately surrounds it with His separate sympathy. In the next place, we must open the heart to that same conviction as it has been profoundly pressed upon the hearts of multitudes of men everywhere. It is not inconceivable. It is only the special prominence of certain ideas in our time that has made some people think it inconceivable that a personal God should care separately for every one of His million children. It is not inconceivable when such multitudes of men have conceived it, have rested their whole weight upon that assurance, have run into the shelter of that certainty whenever the storm was too high and too strong for them. Above all, we must get the great spirit of the Bible. We must read into the heart of the Book of Life until we are thoroughly possessed with its idea—the idea which gives it its whole consistency and shape, the idea without which it would all drop to pieces—that there is not one life which the Life-Giver ever loses out of His sight; not one which sins so that He casts it away; not one which is not so near to Him that whatever touches it touches Him with sorrow or with joy.

Art thou not each man's God—his own,
With secret words between,
As thou and he lived all alone,
Insphered in silence keen?

Ah, God, my heart is not the same
As any heart beside;
My pain is different, and my blame,
My pity and my pride![1]

3. By His existence and by His felt sympathy, then, God gives His *consolations* to the souls of those who need them. But more than this. When your friend is in trouble, you first of all try to remind him, in some most

[1] R. L. Orr, *Lord Guthrie*, 328.

[1] George MacDonald.

unobtrusive way, that you are living, and that you are his friend. Any little token of your love, a gift of flowers, or any trifle, will do that. Then you go and sit down by him and, without a word, let him know not merely in general that you are his friend, but that you are very sorry for him in this special sorrow. But if you really respect him, and care for his whole nature, you want to do something more than that. You want, in the kindest and gentlest way, to get certain great consoling thoughts home to his bruised and broken heart. You are not satisfied until the reason, too, has found its consolation, and through its open doors comfort has spread through the part of his nature which is open to that access. And so it is with God. He, too, has His great truths, His ideas, which He brings to the hearts He wishes to console. He does not treat His sufferers like children who are simply to be petted with soft words, and patted with soft hands till they forget their grief. He deals with them as men who are capable of knowing the meanings, the explanations, and the purposes of the troubles that come to them. And so He gives them His great truths of consolation. What are those truths?

Education, spirituality, and immortality—these seem to be the sum of them. You are in great distress. Your friend is gone. Your life is broken. Your soul is stunned. Is it possible that, when you are sitting still or walking drearily about in your grief, God should make you know education, or the law of growth, the endless principle of the sacrifice of a present for a better future, should reveal spirituality, and make you know the soul's value as far superior to anything that can concern the outer life; should open to you immortality, and show you the endlessness of His plans, so that what has seemed to your wretchedness to be complete and finished should appear to be only just begun, and not ready to be judged of yet? Is there no consolation in these great thoughts? They do not take your sorrow off; whatever be your suffering, learn first of all that what God means is, not to take your sorrow off, but to put strength into you, that you may carry it as the tired man who has drunk of the strength-giving river lifts up his burden by the river-bank and goes singing on his way. Education, spirituality, immortality—those ideas are the keys of all the mysteries of life, and so the gateways to consolation. And it is wonderful to see how, just as soon as a man is really crushed and sorrowful, God seems by every avenue to be offering those great ideas for that man's acceptance. He seems to write them on the sky, to whisper them from every movement of the commonest machinery of life, to fill books with them that never seemed to know anything of them before, to make the vacant house and the full grave declare them. You are a child of God whom He is training. You have a soul which is your true value. You are to live for ever. Know these truths. By them triumph over the sorrow that He cannot take away, and be consoled.

¶ You will not travel to sanctification but through sorrow. You will not get anything in this tangled world but through sorrow. Do not shrink from knowledge because of pain, for it is the pain of a man made in the image of God. The Man of Sorrows was the noblest man of all, and the nearer we rise to Him, the more open shall we be to sorrow.

Where pain ends, gain ends. The highest kind of sorrow is that by which we emerge to the highest life.[1]

4. But even this is not all. God consoles us by what He is, by what He feels for us, by what He teaches us. But all these seem to have something passive about them. They show God sitting, as it were, and letting His life flow out in blessing upon the emptied life that needs Him. But there is hardly a sufferer who does not crave something more active. He wants to feel—at any rate, he thinks how blessed it would be if he could feel—God doing something, showing His sympathy by some strong act. 'Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down,' he cries; 'touch the mountains and they shall smoke.' And so he prays for God to help him, to do something positive for him. What shall it be?

Men are puzzled a good deal about prayer

[1] *The Life of Alexander Whyte, D.D.*, 655.

nowadays. A good many men have really stopped praying for some things which they used to pray for, and for some things which God very much wishes them to pray for still. But the prayer of men for what their souls will always count the greatest miracle of God, for *spiritual regeneration*, for newer, deeper, holier lives—that prayer has probably not been much affected by all the speculations about prayer. It is prayed just as often and as earnestly as ever, and so it will continue to be as long as men's souls continue to bear witness to the power and reality with which it is answered. 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' Men will keep on praying that as long as they believe there is a God, even if they have long ceased to pray for the changing of the wind and the stopping of the pestilence. And so, when a man in trouble prays God to do something for him, this is the real miracle by which God stands ready to answer that man's prayer. He will not send an angel as He did to the women at the tomb, but He will come Himself and show His presence and His power by working the miracle of regeneration upon the soul that has cried out for Him.

That is the consummate consolation; everything leads up to that. A poor creature sitting in sorrow catches sight of God's existence and he is helped. God sends him assurance of His sympathy, and a smile finds its way across the face that seemed all given up to sorrow, and looked as if it would never smile again. God teaches him His truth, and the disheartened heart remembers once more what it was to be brave and strong. But then God comes and takes that soul, and positively, strongly lifts it up and away into the new life. He makes him a new man; and then, when the man stands up, no longer crushed by his sorrow, but made a new man by the touch of God through his sorrow, we look into his glowing face, and ask the old question that Eliphaz asked of Job, 'Are the consolations of God small with thee?' How quick and sure his answer comes back, 'No, very great!' Nay, he is able to take those great words of David which it is terrible to hear people use when they do not mean them, and he fills them with meaning, as he says with serious joy, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.'

If it were but some little thing
  Our Lord saw fit to take away,
A wound with but a slender sting,
  A trouble lasting but a day,
A pang that could be cured ere long—
How could our human faith grow strong?

But when He takes our heart's desire
  All in a moment's agony,
Our spirits pass within the fire,
  And think that surely they must die;
Yet walking in that fierce despair
Find they can trust Him even there.

Nor few are they who thus have seen,
  Although with bitter weeping blind,
That never that dear Lord hath been
  Before so tender or so kind;
No sunny hours could ever prove,
As proves this night of storms, His love.

We know not how His comforts come,
  We see no wondrous Form appear,
We feel no Hand—the world is dumb,
  And yet we know He draweth near;
And as He toucheth us—that hour
The agony has lost its power.

Nor ever, though our life be long,
  And new delights should bring their aid,
Can we forget Who made us strong,
  And bid us never be afraid;
Who chose that dark and fearful place,
To let us see Him face to face.[1]

The Secrets of Success.

Job xvii. 9.—'The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.'

HERE are the secrets of success in life. They are three in number.

1. First, *Piety*.—The 'righteous' man, in the language of the Old Testament, is the God-fearing, upright, and conscientious man. The

[1] J. E. A. Brown.

word 'success' occurs only once in the Bible: 'Be strong and of a good courage. . . . This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt have good success.' The conditions that were laid down to Joshua are binding still: a fearless and inflexible purpose to obey, at all hazards, the will of God; and a learning of that will through study of, and meditation on, His Word. Many a prosperous Christian merchant has held up his Bible and testified, 'That Book has been the secret of my success in life.'

All other things being equal, the youth who enters upon mercantile life imbued with a sense of his accountability to God, possessed of a firm purpose ever to act as under His eye, and gladdened with the joys and hopes which religion inspires, has immense advantages, even as regards his worldly prospects, over another who has no faith whatever. It is true that by throwing conscience to the winds one may occasionally make gains which to the scrupulous are impossible; but there is a Nemesis that pursues such profits, even in this life, and makes a man, generally, the poorer because of them.

¶ We had sent men to buy horses in every direction. One unfortunate man was purchasing animals in the Orange Free State: he had forded a 'drift' easily in the morning, made many purchases in the day, and came to the drift again in the evening. Rain was falling; the water was running breast deep; his horse missed his footing; rider and horse were carried into deep water, and the man was drowned. When his body was recovered, it was found to have on it a leather belt full of gold pieces, more than three hundred in number. Those represented exactly ten per cent. on the purchases of horseflesh made that day. It was their weight that had caused him to sink like a stone.[1]

2. Next, *Perseverance*.—The text may be taken as a Divine promise that those in whose hearts a genuine work of grace has begun will surely be brought to everlasting life. But perseverance is an obligation as well as a promise, and, taking it in its widest sense, is a condition of success. When after long and tedious weeks—their prows towards the setting sun—Columbus and his men saw nothing before them in the western horizon but dreary wastes of water, it wanted no small nerve and courage to persist in the bold enterprise; but if, yielding to the murmurs of the cowardly, he had turned home again, what a grand discovery he would have missed! But the brave explorer still 'held on his way'; and perseverance met with its due reward.

Now, the failure of many young men in life is distinctly due to the absence of this quality. A young fellow enters a merchant's office—good opening, excellent prospects; but, before a twelvemonth is out, he finds he has made a mistake. He determines to be a doctor, and starts a course of medical study, but in a few months gets heartily wearied of that, and is persuaded he is cut out for the law. So he sets forth on a fresh line of rails, only to discover that a professional life will not suit him at all. His ambition now is to be on the Stock Exchange; but the work there soon proves equally distasteful, and he throws it up in disgust. And unless he marries a rich wife (which such a man often contrives to do), he hangs about a penniless good-for-nothing to the end of his days. It is an excellent thing for a youth, almost as soon as school days are over, to have to depend to a great extent upon his own exertions. If he is saved from the effort of making his own way in the world, and the necessity of establishing a position for himself, he is denied a powerful stimulus to toil and perseverance.

¶ President Garfield, who rose by his own exertions from the humblest to the highest station in his own country, once observed, 'In nine times out of ten, the best thing that can happen to a young man is to be tossed overboard, and compelled to sink or swim for himself. In all my acquaintance, I never knew a man to be drowned who was worth saving.'

3. Then *Probity*.—Piety, perseverance, and

[1] *Sir William Butler*, 200.

probity; a gracious soul, a forceful will, and a blameless life. The last is by no means the least important. Let none of us forget to put up that simple prayer of the Psalmist, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God.' But clean hearts must be associated with 'clean hands.' This figure of speech is of frequent occurrence in Scripture, and denotes rectitude in our dealings with our fellow-men. It points to the outward and practical side of piety. No use to join in that petition of the liturgy, 'Make clean, O God, our hearts within us,' if our hands continue defiled with dishonourable proceedings and unholy practices. To what purpose are our morning chapter and morning prayer if we straightway go forth to connive at roguery and fraud? How can we ask the blessing of God upon our day's work if we lend ourselves to anything that is underhand or false?

¶ I have, again and again, had young men coming to me with this burden on their conscience, that they were compelled, in the work of the office or the sale-room, to wink at things which were not right; but they dared not open their lips, or they would instantly lose their situation. I am quite aware such a position is one of great trial; but I have only one advice to give. You cannot take up pitch and keep your hands clean. You cannot be a party to dishonest dealing and remain morally undefiled. It is just in such a case that your faith in God should come to the rescue. What is the worth of your Christian principle if it does not enable you to decide your course, and leave the consequences with God—if it does not assure you that, in the long run, you will be no loser by holding fast your integrity? Be persuaded, he that hath unclean hands shall wax weaker and weaker. Stern integrity is sure to pay. A high-minded, truthful, conscientious man may not meet with success immediately, but he is on the surest road to it. The saying that 'one cannot be honest and live' is as old as the devil, and just as little to be believed. The fact is, character is the best capital a young man can possess. It never pays in the end to have God against you. 'The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich.' Unless you wish your fingers to be defiled, take into your hands nothing but clean money.[1]

¶ It is said of William H. Baldwin, a brilliantly successful American railroad president that 'it was never for a moment his purpose to make all the money he could possibly acquire. With moral deliberation, he set limits to his own acquisition. He would make money, but he would make it with conditions. He would neither be a parasite nor a gambler. Upon principle, he would grow rich more slowly if there were any question of straight and honourable methods. In a case of proposed railroad extension, he was asked, as an official, to take advantage of plans then secret and buy certain properties. He considered it, but refused. "I could have made a pot of money out of that," he said, "but I should have sold much of myself." '[2]

Broken Purposes.

Job xvii. 11.—'My purposes are broken off.'

THERE were buds within our garden, but they never came to flower;
There were birds among our bushes, but they only sang an hour.
And we laughed to see the swallow, but the summer did not follow,
There were buds within our garden, but they never came to flower.

We wakened in the dawning, but we never saw the day;
We spoke our little prologue, but we never reached the play:
Oh, our love was sweet and certain, till grey sorrow dropped the curtain,
Ay, we wakened in the dawning, but we never saw the day.

What does it all mean? Has the Almighty Potter gone mad, when He shatters into fragments the vessels He has moulded with such skill upon His wheel? Faith feels it is a challenge, not merely to the Divine Fair-mindedness, but even to the Divine Intelligence. Not only have they never got a chance to show

[1] J. T. Davidson.
[2] W. D. Hyde, *The Gospel of Good Will*, 113.

what they could make of life, but it seems absurd folly that so much promise should be suddenly blighted, so many purposes broken in death.

One of our young University poets has expressed the feeling with a bitterness that approaches blasphemy.

Sculptor of men, who from Thy throbbing clay
Hast wrought the mould of lovers, art Thou then
Musing on some surpassing-high design
That all yet fashioned Thou must thrust away?

Hast Thou no yearning wish to lift once more
From out Thy rustless dust, a face long veiled
In death—lay thrilling fingers on dark eyes
Which once looked into Thine? Hast Thou so failed

In Thy great art, that not one dream of Thine
Hath taken form to move a mortal's heart
As Thou wouldst have it moved? Ah, I could tell
Thee where one lies—in twilight shade, apart,

Sheltered by murmuring boughs, green mosses drawn
From brow to feet, soft-folded for her pall;
Where music of swift waters lull her sleep,
And for her dirge the wild birds' lonely call.

O Thou unwitting! who didst blindly fling
A magic soul to silence and the dark,
Where was Thy vision? Yea, Thou art like one
Who gave the flight—and yet hath broke the wing.[1]

But is this the right way to put it? Is the fact of the broken column an argument against the fair-mindedness and intelligence of God? The broken column—the life cut short—is one of the strongest of all the pleas which human life affords for the reality of a life beyond the grave. And when we say reality we mean reality: not just a dreamy time of harps and crowns. The column which seems to our finite vision to be broken is not really broken. It is only a scarf of the mist called Death that has trailed its ragged fringe across the trunk of the column and hidden from mortal view the pinnacle, the soul, where the Master Mason still continues building. Only if that demand of faith be true can the Divine Justice vindicate itself. Only so can the Divine reputation for reasonableness be cleared from ridicule. Only so can the Divine self-interest, which is another name for immortal Love, be saved from the humiliation of defeat at the hands of death.

1. Turn to our text. Job exclaimed, 'My purposes are broken off.' There is nothing more important in the development of character than a definite purpose. What makes one life differ from another is some aim upon which the energies of the individual are concentrated. When a man is prepared to sacrifice minor considerations in order to attain some special end, it is often marvellous what he can accomplish in a few years. Whether these energies are directed towards the acquisition of knowledge or the attainment of some position in this world, or above all towards the enlargement of the knowledge of God within the soul—in whatever direction they may be applied, the power of an enduring purpose makes all the difference. It is a remarkable fact, but one that has been verified in the experience of thousands of persons, that the circumstances which at the outset of their career appeared to militate against them gradually became the most important factors in establishing their position.

¶ Of the purpose he set before himself when beginning to study art he once said to me: 'From the very first I determined to do the very best possible to me; I did not hope to make a name, or think much about climbing to the top of the tree, I merely set myself to do the utmost I could, and I think I may say I have never relaxed; to this steady endeavour I owe everything. Hard work, and keeping the definite object of my life in view, has given me whatever position I now have. And I may add, what I think is an encouragement to others, that very few have begun life with fewer advantages, either of health, wealth, or position, or any exceptional intellect. Any

[1] G. O. Warren, *Trackless Regions*, 36.

success I may have had is due entirely to steadiness of purpose.'[1]

2. But in every life there is the possibility of the purpose being frustrated. This was the experience of Job. He was a great man, a man of wealth and renown in all the East, an upright man, one who feared God and eschewed evil. But the day of his calamity had overtaken him. His wealth had disappeared: his sons had been killed. He himself was prostrated with a loathsome disease. The life which had been as a majestic river had suddenly dried up. And hence the bitterness of the cry, 'My purposes are broken off.' It is one of the bitterest cries that can ever escape from human lips. A man will sometimes more readily abandon life itself than a cherished purpose. And yet this is the possibility that confronts us all. We can never tell what is hidden in the future. In a moment all our plans may be upset: the day that dawned calm and promising may close in clouds and storm. It has been said that

> Never morning wore to evening
> But some heart did break.

And one has only to look at the columns of any newspaper to find the words verified.

¶ There is in Fyvie Church, at the end of the chancel, a window that is invested with a special interest. It was dedicated several years ago to the memory of Lieutenant Percy Forbes Leith, the only son of Lord and Lady Leith of Fyvie Castle. He went to the Boer War at a comparatively early age, alas! never to return. His life was laid as a sacrifice on the altar of his country; and his friends in America desired that this memorial to his worth should be associated with the Parish Church. Sir Herbert Maxwell declares that it is one of the finest examples of modern stain-glass work. There is only one figure represented, a warrior who appears to be rising out of the darkness into the light. Beneath his feet there is impenetrable gloom, above and beyond him are the opening clouds betokening the coming glory. It is a remarkable conception, which at once arrests the eye of the beholder. But what gives a special interpretation and pathos to the conception is the text inscribed on the window, 'My purposes are broken off.' It reminds us that this young officer, full of promise, was cut down in the morning of his days—that only a memory was left instead of the full-orbed life that might have been.[1]

3. But there is not only the tragedy of life, there is the joy of life; and they are to be pitied who have never known that exuberance of feeling which for the time being exalts us above every depressing influence. There is likewise the joy which many have known in the thought of a life manfully completed, of a life lost in some vaster experience. This is no mere fanciful conjecture. Stevenson has embodied this idea in lines that are familiar:

> Under the wide and starry sky
> Dig the grave and let me lie.
> Glad did I live and gladly die,
> And I laid me down with a will.
>
> This be the verse you grave for me—
> Here he lies where he longed to be.
> Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
> And the hunter home from the hill.

It was not that he was tired of life, but he declared before the world that he was not afraid of death. He was glad to live, and he was ready to die. It is in this dual conception that the true victory of life is found.

We have the same idea embodied in St. Paul's words, for one of his fundamental conceptions is that in Jesus Christ we are conquerors over death and time. 'Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. . . . We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' Here was a man who was thoroughly persuaded in his own mind. This is not the language of hesitation but of confidence. Whilst he was perfectly willing to labour in this world as long as it was God's good pleasure, he had a preference

[1] M. S. Watts, *George Frederic Watts*, i. 17.

[1] J. Lamond.

'to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.' It is a conception that he frequently dwells on in his writings. He was not so enamoured of life that he should ignore the greater possibilities that lay in the Beyond.

It is this confidence which the gospel can afford, and which makes each one of us victorious over our circumstances, whatever they may be. Schiller has declared that there can be no true view of life that does not include the background of a future state. He saw that life had two sides, the appearance that is manifested in this world, which is often angular and incomplete, but which is merely a type or suggestion of a far deeper and more permanent fact. For in reality there is no failure anywhere of sincere effort—absolutely none. Did sincere effort fail, then God were not God. It is because God is everywhere, and in all Time, that every true effort will find its reward. Only to the outward vision can any true purpose be said to fail. We see the unfinished result, and proclaim in our blindness, Here, if anywhere, there is failure! But the failure is only on the surface.

¶ When Dr. Laws gave up Cape Maclear Mission station to go north and found Livingstonia 'up in the jungle on the hillside the baboons sat and witnessed the departure, and their raucous barking was more like jeering laughter than ever. It seemed to say, "We told you so." And in Scotland many human beings counted the Mission a failure. They tabulated the first five years by methods of book-keeping:

Liabilities.	Assets.
5 European graves.	1 convert.
5 years' expenditure, £20,000.	1 abandoned station.
5 years' hardship and toil.	

A single Christian, one station which had proved a white man's grave, given up; and everywhere seething masses of heathenism, slave drives, war raids, tribal fights, and poison ordeals. Surely it was a pitiful fiasco!'[1]

[1] W. P. Livingstone, *Laws of Livingstonia*, 183.

The Redeemer.

Job xix. 25-27.—'For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.'

1. This familiar passage has had a strange history. Almost within our own memory it has passed through three stages of interpretation.

(1) First it was looked upon as a clear statement of Job's belief in a future life. Loftiest, perhaps, amongst the defiances of death and of the grave with which the Burial Service of the Church of England abounds are those opening sentences of it with which the minister is bidden to greet the mourners as they draw nigh to the place where they are to lay their dead. As he meets them he is charged to speak to them those words on which the faith of Christendom has stayed itself from the hour in which they were first spoken: 'I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' And then, as it were in answer to this promise of the risen Lord, he speaks for them the words that utter the challenge of the Christian in the face of death: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.'

Those who have listened in the hour of their sorrow to these words know how they fall upon the ear like the solemn music of some stately funeral march fraught with dear and sad, yet glorious and sustaining memories. The farewells of the dying, the lamentations for the dead, the broken words of resignation in which mourners sob out their submisson to the Father's will, seem to mingle with the hymns of confessors and the psalms of martyrs and the far-off songs of the multitude of redeemed ones who have passed beyond the

shadow of our night into the brightness of the eternal day; and so, with firmer step and calmer mien, we follow our dead to their last resting-place, and we in our turn take up the Church's song of triumph over death, as we, too, say, though with quivering lips and faltering voice, 'We know that our Redeemer liveth.'

(2) Then we were told that we must say these words no more. They are a mis-translation. The passage, as it stands in the Revised Version, runs thus:—'I know that my redeemer (or vindicator) liveth, and that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth; and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God.'

That is to say, Job is here only expressing his firm belief that, in spite of all he has suffered, in spite of the terrible ravages that disease has wrought in his body, an avenger or deliverer will come for him, and that from his flesh, that is, from out of the healed and restored flesh of his living body, he should see God—the God whom he had once known as his loving and gracious Father, and whom he was so to know again. Him he should see for himself with his own eyes, and not through the representations or the arguments and pleading of another. In a word, what Job is really described as expressing is not his sure and certain hope of his resurrection after death, but his sure and certain hope of his restoration to health and happiness before his death, and, therefore, there is in this passage no such distinct prophecy of the resurrection of the dead as we have hitherto supposed it to contain.

(3) But there has been a reaction. The more recent interpretation finds (after the severest scrutiny of the text) a real belief on Job's part in a life after death in which he will see God and be vindicated.

2. Let us take Professor A. B. Davidson's interpretation: The passage follows that hardest of all speeches in chap. xviii., in which Bildad, with scarcely concealed insinuations, pictured the awful fate of the sinner. Under his terrible picture he wrote: 'These are the habitations of the wicked,' and he held it up before Job. It was meant for him. The terrible distemper, the firstborn of death, which consumes the sinner's limbs, was too plain an allusion to Job's leprosy to be mistaken by him. The brimstone that burns up the sinner's habitation was, no doubt, the fire of God that fell on Job's cattle and consumed them. The tree withered at the roots, and cut down, reminds Job too easily of his own wasted state, and the sad calamities that had lopped off his children from him. He is the sinner. To every sentence of his oration Bildad adds: 'Thou art the man.'

Against this application Job's whole soul protests. He resolutely maintains his innocence. But while maintaining it he realizes with new distinctness his dreary isolation, God and man having alike turned against him. This he describes in most pathetic words. Yet so profound and unalterable is his conviction of his own innocence that, as with a desperate leap out of the depth of his misery, he rises to the assurance that his innocence shall yet be revealed; that God will publicly declare it; and that he himself shall hear the declaration, and see the Redeemer that makes it. 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' The joyful anticipation overcomes him, and he faints with longing: 'My reins are consumed within me.'

It is the lowest ebb of sorrow that precedes the flow of this full tide of faith. God not only afflicted Job with trouble, but removed from him all human sympathy: 'He hath put my brethren far from me; and my familiar friends have forgotten me.' There is something more breaking to the heart in the turning away of men from us than in the acutest pain. It crushes us quite. We steel ourselves against it for a time, and rise to it in bitterness and resentment. But it breaks us at last and we soften and are utterly crushed. And this seems the way, whether men frown on us with justice or no. And there came on Job, when he drew before himself his complete casting off by men, by his friends and his household, and even by the little children, who mocked his vain attempts to rise from the ground, a complete break-down, and he bursts into that most touching of all his cries: 'Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my

friends. Why do ye persecute me like God?' But his appeal is in vain. Those pharisaic muscles will not move. The rigidity of that religious decorum no human feeling shall break. Secure in their principles and their piety, their countenance shows but austere reprobation of their wicked friend. They will be more austere because he is their friend, and because they feel it a sacrifice to be austere. And, looking into their hard eyes and set faces, Job reads only their unalterable verdict against him. Then, turning away from them, the desire suddenly seized him to make his appeal to posterity—to the better informed and calmer judgment of the future; to record in writing his protestation of his innocence; to grave it in the rock, that it might last for ever, and that all generations to the end of time might read, when they listened to his story, the solemn denial of his guilt. 'Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were graven in the rock for ever!'

But if that were possible, how small a thing it would be after all! Job needs more; he shall have more. This invincible confidence in his innocence and in his godliness makes him feel that behind all the darkness there is a face that looks kindly on him—the face of a living God with whom he has walked in fellowship, who knows his innocence, and who shall yet make it manifest to the world: 'But I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that afterward he shall stand upon the dust: and after my skin is consumed, and without my flesh, shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold. Oh, my reins faint within me!'

We must consider what Job was—his righteousness, which is the very basis of all: a just man, fearing God and eschewing evil; a man in union with God—living by faith in God, justified by faith, and having peace with God. In the general providence of God, which embraces all, and where each unit is made to contribute by help or suffering to the advance and good of the whole, great calamities had fallen on him. He was maligned by Satan; he was suspected by men. Even God's countenance seemed to him withdrawn from him. This life became a riddle to him; he shuddered with awe at the problems regarding God's character and government which the universe and his own experience presented to him: 'It is God that makes my heart weak, and the Almighty that troubles me: for I am not afraid before the darkness that covers my own face.' It was not his calamities, it was this, that they were due to God, that frightened him. The world seemed to be dissolving into disorder, and the moral governor of it becoming a mere arbitrary force, whose attribute, if he had one, was cruelty—'righteous and wicked He destroys alike.' The universe was becoming a machine that inexorably gnawed to death the creatures upon it, regardless alike of their lamentations and their protests in the name of righteousness. It is out of this lowest depth that the sufferer's mind leaps to its highest height. He knows that this cannot be so; he recalls the past—his fellowship with God—the months past when God's candle shined upon his head; and this God still lives, and still is what He ever was. And out of his very necessity, his heart projects a scene that shall yet be enacted on the world, when God, his Redeemer and Deliverer, shall descend from heaven and stand upon the earth, and shall clear up the mysteries of life, and acknowledge publicly those that are His own, and give unto all according as their work shall be.[1]

The Efficacy of Prayer.

Job xxi. 15.—'What profit should we have if we pray unto him?'

THIS question, which in the Book of Job is raised by the wicked, and in unbelief, is in our day raised by some very earnest inquirers, who are reverently seeking valid grounds for a belief with which they have no desire to part—their belief in the efficacy of prayer.

That prayer has some effect, all would admit. 'No act falls fruitless.' The Spanish devotee praying to his patron saint, the idolater praying to his idol, produces at least an effect upon himself. Prayer intelligently

[1] A. B. Davidson, *Waiting upon God*, 91ff.

offered involves confession of our trust in God and our submission to Him. Its natural effect, at the very lowest estimate, must be to develop the feelings which it strives to express. Prayer for a right spirit obviously tends to produce a right spirit. But the efficacy of prayer, though it may begin, does not end within oneself. It is no self-magnetizing process. We should not pray at all, but for our conviction that prayer produces an effect external as well as internal.

1. The discovery which science has made of an established and uniform order in Nature has given rise to inquiry as to what place, if any, can be assigned to prayer. So far as we believe in the infinite wisdom and goodness and power of God, we must logically hold that the actual order of things is better than any other and imaginary order. That it is irrational to ask for a change of that which is better than any other, that it has not been left open to arbitrary change, and subject to consequent uncertainty, the scientific man contends, and we agree. But we do not thereupon conclude that in this view of things prayer is a superfluity and an impertinence. If one thinks it absurd to imagine that our prayer can change the established order of things, we may point to the fact that men apparently change that order at their will, as when tropical plants are made to flourish in northern latitudes by erecting over them a roof of glass. Why may not our will, through the medium of certain invisible agencies, exert a similar power by prayer? To this one answers that the action of our will in changing the face of the world and the course of events is not outside of the established order of things, but a part of it. But exactly so we are to think of prayer, as working within the natural order of things, and forming a harmonious element of that order. In a right view of things prayer is in rational consistency alike with the scientific conception of Nature, as an organized connection of causes and effects, and with the metaphysical conception of God, as comprehending within His infinite and universal consciousness all the individual consciousness of finite minds.

In such a conception of prayer we rest the more confidently because, although it is still open to a certain objection, it is open to no objection that does not lie equally against every other spontaneous effort of the human will to secure its desired ends. The one objection that may still occur is against the idea that anything apparently so free, self-moved and spontaneous as prayer can be a predetermined part of the order of events. But why not, as much as any other of the acts which we perform most freely? It is already predetermined in what form some vexed political questions are to be settled by-and-by. Nobody will exert himself any the less to settle the questions which, in a metaphysical view of things, he knows are settled already. In such matters we see the necessary connection between means and ends. Common-sense tells us to drop our speculations about the unknowable, and go to work. In prayer we do not see the connection between means and ends. But the sufficient authority of Christ declares there is such a connection: 'Ask and ye shall receive.' The dictate of reason is to act on what we know, taking no counsel from ignorance. Let the pressure of a great need fall upon us, and our doubts quickly yield to the inborn instinct of the soul to pray. 'When the wish within you,' says Asmus, 'concerns you nearly, and is very ardent, it will not question long; it will overpower you like a strong man armed; it will hurry on a few rags of words, and knock at the gate of heaven.'

¶ Human nature prompts us to pray. God wrote it and writes it on the heart which does not deaden itself to His voice. There is scarce a heathen nation, however degraded, which does not pray at times. Does it not strike you at times, 'Is it not a little presumptuous (I will not say conceited) in me to think that I am right and the whole world besides wrong? I, an unit among all the millions of millions and billions of billions who prayed and believed that they were heard!' You ask, 'What is the good that the Deity should bid us ask, since He knows already what we want?' God teaches us through our children. Is it not a happiness to a child to look up

into a father's or mother's face, and ask them for what it wants and have it given them? Is it not nature to hold up its little arms and ask for what it wants? Painters have loved to draw it. I do not think that you would count it a loving child which sat in the dumps and would not ask. But more, Do you think yourself wiser than Jesus, Who said, 'Ask and ye shall receive'? Millions of millions have asked, and know that they have received. If you have not asked, you cannot know that those who did ask did not receive. But after all, does it not startle you, that with no ground except your own idea of what is fitting for Almighty God, you give the lie to Jesus, and say that He said what was not true?[1]

2. But the main corrective to doubt regarding the efficacy of prayer is not to be addressed to the understanding in the shape of more satisfactory definitions and the refutation of objections. It must be applied to the source whence doubt arises—a spiritual atmosphere. 'Hence it is,' says Dr. James Martineau, 'that in many a mind a mass of sceptic clouds, charged with thunders of denial, will cling steadfast to its cold heights against your keenest blasts of argument, and then by some unnoticed change in the climate of the soul, will silently disperse.' We shall find it true that as our spiritual temperature rises, our doubts about prayer dissolve.

That there is an invisible universe, out of which the visible universe came forth, is the conclusion of some of the ablest teachers of modern science. That there is some constant interaction of the two is not open to reasonable doubt. There should be some practical recognition of this truth. The practical and common recognition of this is through prayer. Stewart and Tait in their remarkable but now forgotten book, *The Unseen Universe*, say, man 'ought to live for the unseen—to carry into it something which may not be wholly unacceptable. But, in order to enable him to do this, the unseen must also work upon him, and its influences must pervade his spiritual nature. Thus a life *for* the unseen *through* the unseen is to be regarded as the only perfect life.'

Now prayer is the natural response of the spirit to its unseen environment. Prayer is also a sufficient attestation of the reality of this invisible environment. If we deny this, we should have to assume that the praying instinct of man is a colossal fraud of Nature. The glimpses of this unseen surrounding world, which ages of a more child-like faith than ours have reported—the visions of angels as 'ministering spirits'; the visit of Moses and Elijah in glory to Jesus praying on the mount of the Transfiguration; the occasional flashing into the sight of prophets and of shepherds of the radiant armies of the sky—do not find credence on the ground simply of the venerable record in which we read of them. The fact that the Author of Nature has so constituted us that we instinctively attempt communion with a world of spiritual powers through prayer forbids us either to doubt the reality of that world, or to allow ignorance to cripple faith in its responsiveness to our prayer.

But the fact of this unseen environing universe has something more than argument to evidence it. We all—save those who have so immured themselves within the barriers of sense that the power of seeing beyond has become, like the eyes of cave-fishes, extinct—may say, as Wordsworth says:—

> Hence in a season of calm weather
> Though inland far we be,
> Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither,
> Can in a moment travel thither,
> And see the Children sport upon the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

Does one who has his eyes thus open find himself occasionally plagued with doubts whether he, through prayer, can be an efficient cause in that unseen world of causes? These doubts, the

> Blank misgivings of a creature
> Moving about in worlds not realized,

have their source in a feeble conviction of the imperfectly discerned realities. They must

[1] *Spiritual Letters of E. B. Pusey, D.D.*, 163.

be cured by converse with those more conversant with those realities than we. The more penetrating and better disciplined vision of another must lend us, as it were, both eyes and judgment.

3. Here, then, we find Christ at our side as the great demonstrator, out of His intuitive knowledge of the unseen world, of the objective efficacy of prayer. Certainly, He enjoined no futile effort when He said, 'Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his harvest.' We hear Him, on the night before He suffered, interceding in prayer as He bade us intercede: 'I pray . . . that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one.' We may be convinced that intercessory prayer, when lifted by the spirit of Christ—in whomsoever dwells that spirit of full consecration to God and His kingdom—is an efficient power. Thus reasoned, or rather thus felt, the men likest to Christ. When Paul says to the Colossians, 'Pray for us, that God would open unto us a door'; to the Corinthians, that they are helping him by their supplications; when he makes mention to churches and to individuals of his continual prayer on their behalf, we see the spirit of Christ in him engaged in its characteristic work of intercessory prayer. The rustic who caught a glimpse in the woods at Valley Forge of Washington on his knees in prayer during that darkest period of the patriot struggle, and from the sight conceived a conviction of the destined victory, felt what we must far more strongly feel, when we see Jesus and Paul and John in prayer for others.

In such a presence doubts melt, assurance grows; we may not comprehend the process, but we recognize the power; we believe with John: 'If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.' Not everyone can bend Ulysses' bow or wield King Richard's sword. Not everyone can pray as Paul and John prayed. Nevertheless, as the faltering soldier's spirit rises when his general heads the charge, so we feel the misgivings born of ignorance give way when we see these heroes of prayer addressing themselves to the Throne of Grace. Our refuge from doubt is in their society; our convincing argument is in their experience.[1]

¶ History and biography come in as witnesses to the profit and value of prayer. When a large number of scientific men, who have had ample time and opportunity for rigid examination, affirm with united voice any given scientific truth, we readily accept the truth on the authority of competent men able to verify it by full observation. Thus, all our astronomical knowledge is based on the telescopic observations and mathematical calculations of a very few observers and calculators, scattered here and there in a few observatories. The common mind is not capable of testing the truth of these observations and calculations; yet the world readily accepts them; and our clocks, and our almanacs, and our arrangement of civil time, and all our navigation at sea, and a hundred other things, are based on the observations of these few star-gazers. Here the testimony of a few is received and acted upon by the many, because they have confidence in the ability of these few to speak upon this subject. In this case the whole question comes down to one of competent witnesses; and indeed every assertion of scientific men, on scientific subjects, is resolvable into a matter of competent observers, and competent testifiers. Apply this test to prayer. Call in witnesses, competent witnesses, men whose testimony is unimpeachable; men who have had large personal experience and observation on this subject; men who have witnessed its effects on families, tribes, and kingdoms. Summon these witnesses not from one land, but from all lands; not from one nation, but from all nations; not from one age, but from all ages; not from one class of society, but from all classes; gather up their united testimony and give it voice, and it is clear, uniform, and universal as to the comfort and profit of prayer.[2]

¶ Of Mary Slessor in her loneliness and isolation her biographer writes: 'She was only sustained by her faith in the efficacy of prayer

[1] J. M. Whiton.
[2] W. B. Stevens.

and by her communion with the Father. "My one great consolation and rest," she wrote, "is in prayer." So invariably was she preserved from harm and hurt, that her reliance upon a higher strength became an instinctive habit. It conquered her natural nervousness and apprehension. She had frequently to take journeys through the forest with the leopards swarming around her. "I did not use to believe the story of Daniel in the lions' den," she often said, "until I had to take some of these awful marches, and then I knew it was true, and that it was written for my comfort. Many a time I walked along praying, 'O God of Daniel shut their mouths,' and He did" '.

And again: 'She had absolute faith in intercession. "Prayer," she said, "is the greatest power God has put into our hands for service—praying is harder work than doing, at least I find it so, but the dynamic lies that way to advance the Kingdom." She believed that some of her official friends, the Empire-builders, were kept straight in this way: "The bands that mothers and sisters weave by prayer and precept are the strongest in the world." There was nothing she asked her friends more often at home to do than to pray for the Mission and the workers. "Don't stop praying for us," she pleaded, and her injunctions were sometimes pathetic in their personal application: "Pray that the power of Christ may rest on me, that He may never be disappointed in me or find me disobedient to the heavenly vision when He shows the way, pray that I may make no false moves, but that the spirit will say, 'Go here and go there' ". She was always convinced that it was the prayers of the people in Scotland that carried her on and made the work possible. "It is so customary to put aside those who, like myself, are old-fashioned and unable for the burden and heat of the day; but in my case it is care and love and forbearance all the way through; and all this I trace back to the great amount of prayer which has ever followed me, to the quality more than the quantity of that intercession. Prayer-waves pulsate from Britain all through Calabar." To one who had always prayed for her she also wrote: "I have always said that I have no idea how and why God has carried me over so many funny and hard places, and made these hordes of people submit to me, or why the Government should have given me the privilege of a magistrate among them, except in answer to prayer made at home for me. It is all beyond my comprehension. The only way I can explain it is on the ground that I have been prayed for more than most. Pray on, dear one—the power lies that way" '.[1]

Profitable to God.

Job xxii. 2.—'Can a man be profitable to God?'

ELIPHAZ starts a question of the greatest interest both in theology and in religion—Can a man be profitable to God? Does it make any difference to God whether man serves the end of his being or not? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that a man is righteous?

1. The answer to the question lies in the book which records it. The Book of Job is a sublime moral drama. We see the Almighty contemplating with satisfaction the uprightness of a man. We see Him defending that uprightness against the malicious insinuations of his own enemy and man's, Satan. We see Him permitting Satan to take away those rewards which he had suggested were the cause of Job's uprightness, and then pointing with undisguised pleasure to the noble character which still remained, like an unbroken pillar amid ruins. We see Him granting a further trial, and allowing Job to be smitten with a loathsome disease, so low that his bosom friends and even his wife recoiled from him; we see Him watching with intense interest, and then rejoicing with unfeigned satisfaction over the integrity which stood unshaken by tests so crucial. 'Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous?' With the Book of Job open before us, we answer, Yes.

2. A better reply still is furnished by the teaching of Jesus. He revealed God. He

[1] W. P. Livingstone, *Mary Slessor of Calabar*, 106. 294.

was God. And in beautiful similitudes He spoke of the Divine concern for the soul of man and the Divine joy in its salvation. He said that a shepherd had a hundred sheep in pastures green, one of which strayed, leaving him in the fold with ninety and nine. What did the shepherd do? He remained, Eliphaz would have said, contented with the ninety and nine and undisturbed by the insignificant loss of one. No, said Jesus, He could not be happy while that one strayed. He went after it, and, although His hands and feet were torn by desert brambles, persisted in His quest, suffering and bleeding, until He found it. And the shepherd is God, and the lost sheep the soul of man.

Jesus even likened God to a father, and His concern for man to the anxiety of a parent for the return of his prodigal son. We see the grey-haired father morning after morning mounting the hill, and, shading his eyes with his hand, scanning the horizon narrowly for the dim form of a traveller. We see him evening by evening ascending to his housetop, and looking all around for a cloud of dust, an unwonted appearance, some indication that the prodigal has turned again home. And the Father is God, and the prodigal son the soul of man. And yet it is no pleasure to the Almighty that we are pious, and man cannot profit Him!

3. But more than the teaching is the work of Christ an answer to Eliphaz. Why that august atonement, that precious blood shedding, if man is of no consequence to God? No basis can be found for the work of redemption, it cannot be explained—still less can it be justified—except on the belief that man is so precious to God that the death of Christ was not deemed too high a price to pay for his redemption. And this is borne out by what the New Testament says as to the end of redemption: 'Ye were bought with a price: glorify God, therefore, in your body.' Redeemed for God's glory—redeemed to be profitable unto Him. Would God have spared not His own Son, but given Him up for us all, for any lower end than that we should serve Him? The entire New Testament idea of redeemed, consecrated service rests on the thought that a man can be profitable unto God; and surely no higher motive, no more powerful inspiration to service, could be presented to us.

¶ The Greek word for 'profitable,' is *onesimus,* and one who was Onesimus both in name and nature is the subject of one of the most perfect letters of Paul. He writes to Philemon, asking him to receive back his servant who had run away from his master, and had, by a singular providence, met Paul in Rome, and been brought by him to Christ. Paul pleads with his master to take him back, and in doing so he plays upon his name. In time past, he says, he was anything but Onesimus, but now both to me and thee his nature bears out his name, for he is truly *onesimus;* and what the changed Onesimus could be and was to Paul and Philemon, Christ's redemptive grace is designed by God to make you and me to Him: to change us from worthless sinners into worthy children, from worthless rebels into profitable servants, to make us God's *Onesimi,* God's profitable ones.[1]

Nay, I am not my own—
Not free to take the purchase of His death
And use it otherwise than as He wills—
To waste the gifts that He entrusts to me,
Or lay an unused talent at His feet,
Or only yield a harvest of dead leaves
Instead of precious fruit. All that I have,
All that I am or ever hope to be,
He has a right to claim, who paid the cost
Of freedom from the law of death for me.

Henceforth, O Master, let me be Thy slave.
These hands of mine—nay, Thine—shall toil for Thee;
These feet shall follow Thee along life's way—
These lips declare Thy glory, and Thy love—
The strength by which Thou hast delivered me;
Yea, all my being shall be spent for Thee.[2]

[1] D. Purves.
[2] Edith H. Divall, *A Believer's Songs,* 15.

The Knowledge of God.

Job xxii. 21.—'Acquaint now thyself with him.'

Job's troubles had brought upon him a severe reproach. He was condemned by his people as a bad man. The creed of the day was that all suffering and misfortune are the punishment of personal sin, so that if a man suffered as Job did in his fortunes and family and person, there was no further proof required that he was a great sinner in the sight of God. The creed was held very tenaciously, so that however much Job asserted his integrity and uprightness, his friends would not—could not—believe him. And they were shocked beyond measure at what looked very like hypocrisy. They were horrified at his impenitence. It was awful enough that he should have sinned and suffered so greatly, but that he should aggravate his sin by denying his guilt made them tremble with fear for their friend. So they expostulated with him, entreated him, warned him. But all their 'comfort' left Job unrepentant. He was conscious of his integrity; he could not admit the charges brought against him by his friends. So Eliphaz again pleads with him. It is because Job does not know God as He is to be known that he speaks so arrogantly and foolishly. Therefore he urges Job, 'Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.'

Eliphaz was wrong in his premise, but he was right in his conclusion. It is a word of advice which is good at all times, and necessary. And it was never more necessary than now.

'A general real belief in God,' says one of the most thoughtful and original of our present-day writers, 'would wake the world into newness of life. Nothing is so greatly needed.' Is it, then, to be understood that there is not a general belief in God, or that the belief is not real? The implication of the words being admitted, let us see how the world can recover a general belief in God.

1. Consider, first of all, the revelation of God in *Nature*. From the universe as a subject of inquiry and knowledge, there is this, at any rate, which can be known about the power that produced it all: that power is intelligent, because the universe is an order and not a discord; it is a rational order; it is capable of rational study, and of the knowledge of intelligent beings. If it were not so there could be no such thing as science, for science depends entirely on the fact that there is an order, a uniformity and an intelligibility in Nature itself. We may say, therefore, that science tells us that the power that is responsible for the universe is an intelligence. Of course our own finite and very limited intelligence is not able to form even the faintest conception of that transcendent intelligence which hung the solar systems in space, which made a habitable globe, which produced life, and which conducted that course of development which we now know as evolution. Our imperfect intelligence cannot conceive the nature of that intelligence, but at least it knows that it is an intelligence; it is at least certain that that intelligence produced what is intelligible, rational, orderly.

There is another point about which we can be equally certain. We are sure that the power that produced the universe has in it the love of beauty, because the most striking feature of the universe as we study it is that it is so beautiful. Beauty is not an accident of a particular thing or a particular condition; it appears to be universal—the galaxy in the sky at night, the sky, the earth and the sea by day, the incoming of the dawn, the colours of the sunset, the forms of vegetable life, the forms of animal life. So intrinsically beautiful is the vegetable life that even when it decays the waning woods turn into new beauty, with deeper and more exquisite colours, and the fallen leaf is, if possible, more lovely than the leaf that first unfurled in the spring. And, if we carry this investigation further by the help of the microscope, we discover that this element of beauty is not relative to our sight, it exists beyond our sight; for the minute particle under the microscope, the portion of the wing of an insect, or even a grain of dust from the river bed, is as beautiful as the starry heavens, as perfect as the flower

that we see and smell. Of this, then, we can be perfectly certain, that in the power that produced the universe there is the sense of beauty; and as science demands that the power is intelligent, art demands that the power is æsthetic.

Could my heart but see Creation as God sees it,—from within;
See His grace behind its beauty, see His will behind its force;
See the flame of life shoot upward when the April days begin;
See the wave of life rush outward from its pure eternal source;

Could I see the summer sunrise glow with God's transcendent hope;
See His peace upon the waters in the moonlight summer night;
See Him nearer still when, blinded, in the depths of gloom I grope,—
See the darkness flash and quiver with the gladness of His light;

Could I see the red-hot passion of His love resistless burn
Through the dumb despair of winter, through the frozen lifeless clod;—
Could I see what lies around me as God sees it, I should learn
That its outward life is nothing, that its inward life is God.

Vain the dream! Yet in the morning, when the eastern skies are red,
When the dew is on the meadows, when the lark soars up and sings,—
Leaps a sudden flame within me from its ashes pale and dead,
And I see God's beauty burning through the veil of outward things.

Brighter grows the veil and clearer, till, beyond all fear and doubt,
I am ravished by God's splendour into oneness with His rest;
And I draw the world within me, and I send my soul without;
And God's pulse is in my bosom, and I lie upon God's breast.[1]

[1] E. G. A. Holmes.

2. But now turn to a second line of thought —the revelation of God in *history*. When the student of history begins to examine the course of human affairs he finds that it is a course, that there is some intelligible movement in it —that it is not a series of casual accidents leading to nothing. There is some purpose discoverable in the whole development. He finds that history does not consist, as the Spanish philosopher supposed, of a series of cycles returning ever to the same point; he finds that it is a progress. It may not be possible for any single mind to give a complete philosophy of history, but no intelligent person doubts that there is a philosophy of history, that the story of man on the earth is a story which is being told and which will reach its conclusion. When we examine the development of history we see that it is not the product of the men who are living to-day, nor was it expected by the men who lived in former times. It is a development that appears to be going on irrespective of our knowledge, though not without our co-operation. Perhaps its most obvious feature is that nations rise and fall upon a clear and intelligible principle. It is not by accident that nations decay. Virtue is life, vice is disease and death: when nations lose their virtue they decay. The torch of progress passes from hand to hand, from nation to nation. No one who has ever studied history can fail to be impressed with the fact that it is a moral progress, that it is moving towards some far-off Divine event. Emerson said that organized Nature has a destiny and that it is amelioration, and who can tell its limits? The same remark is true of history. It is something organic, developing, and it develops towards amelioration, betterment—it is an upward movement.

¶ It is almost impossible to take up history at any point and carefully study it without becoming quite aware that there is a principle at work in it, a great moral principle—that the controlling power of history is a moral power working towards an end on a principle of righteousness. I was struck the other day by a passage in the old Greek poem of Euripides, written, remember, four centuries be-

fore Christ, and there he puts into the mouth of Hecuba, the Queen of Troy, some famous words. Hecuba has denied all the gods of the Greek Pantheon. She is what you would call an agnostic, a sceptic, and yet she suddenly breaks out in *The Troades* in these words:

Thou deep base of all the world,
And thou high throne above the world,
Whoe'er thou art, unknown and hard of surmise,
Chain of things that be, or reason of our reason,
God, to Thee I lift my praise;
Thou art the silent road that bringeth justice, ere the end be trod,
To all that breathes and dies.

And what the discerning eye of Euripides has seen I should have thought every clear thinker is bound to see: that the course of human affairs, the history of man, is not a series of accidents—it is a progress determined by a moral idea. And that moral idea is not the idea of the contemporaries who are working out the idea—it is an idea inherent in it all. Therefore, at least, we know this concerning the power that is at work in the world, that it is a power that is making for righteousness, it is a power in which justice and mercy combine, and in which there is no conflicting with a sure law, a law that we might, if we would, understand. . . . 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' says the writer in the Bible. You might also say, 'Shall not the justice that works throughout history be God?'[1]

3. But there is a third line of reflection which should not be omitted. It is now receiving attention from psychologists and from all people who think—the revelation of God to *consciousness*. Unless men are untrustworthy and their witness cannot be believed, we find that people in the history of the world have had and have direct experience of God, a knowledge which sometimes is rich and illuminating, and often is intuitive and absolutely certain. If that is not to be believed it means that we must discredit human testimony altogether, and, what is more serious still, we must discredit the testimony of the best and noblest human beings that ever lived. Now this knowledge, or the revelation of God to the consciousness of man, is sometimes called mysticism, and the word mysticism is used in a deprecatory sense. It is supposed that if we call it mysticism we have condemned it as untrue. But remember the word mysticism does not signify anything that is untrue or imaginary; it is the degraded use of the word that hampers us. Mysticism is simply the word chosen to describe this immediate consciousness of God which has been the experience of multitudes of human beings. According to the testimony of these men there is a knowledge of God which is immediate and which is unmistakable. It grows in pursuance of a certain ethical principle. Where a man is bent upon purity the experience grows. The pure in heart see God. Where the intention becomes clear and simple in life the experience becomes more certain. The single-minded, the open-eyed, see God. According to a principle which can be traced all through the records of humanity, men under certain ethical influences and with a certain purity of intention enter into a communion of spirit with Spirit, of finite with Infinite, and the man knows that he is with God and that God is communicating with him. And it is this spiritual experience of certain minds that constitutes the history and the evidence of true religion in the world. It is found in the Vedas of India, it is found in the philosophy of Plato, but it is found much more fully and completely in the great Christian authors like St. Augustine.

¶ For the illustration of this point take up the book that is within your reach—examine the Psalter. It is accessible, you can easily read it, and reading through the Psalms you cannot doubt that there a conversation is going on between these writers and the invisible God. It is all perfectly real to them. Each writer is speaking of God as a reality, as real as any person. What can be nearer, or what can be surer, than God is to the writers of the Psalms, and what can be more beautiful, and what more attractive, than the image of

[1] R. F. Horton.

God that is reflected in the tranquil bosoms of these writers? Sometimes, of course, the mirror is roughened with passion and storm and the face is distorted, but again and again the waters grow still, and in some tranquil mirror of the breast God is reflected in a form and in a character that takes the heart of man captive. He is the Good Shepherd, leading the soul into green pastures and by still waters, through the valley of the shadow of death, in the presence of enemies; He anoints the head with oil and the cup runs over, and the exultant spirit fears no evil because He is with him, and he knows that neither life nor death can separate him from the true source of his being, the Lord, his Shepherd. What can be nearer, or what more attractive than the Being which is thus reflected in the literature of the Psalter?

There is something nearer and something more attractive in this history of the mystical union of God with man. By the acceptance and admission of the great majority of people who have ever studied the question the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus is both nearer and more attractive than any light that is found in any soul or in any book elsewhere. You look into the soul of Jesus as it is reflected in the Gospel story, and there seems no perturbation upon that tranquil surface. Reflected there quite distinctly is God, and the Being that is reflected is at once a perfectly righteous authority and a loving father; the Being that is reflected there is a Shepherd of the sheep, and a Physician of the sick; it is a Being holy and yet tender, a Being righteous and yet pitiful to those who fall, a Being that seeks to restore and to save, and loves all along.[1]

Acquaintance with God.

Job xxii. 21.—'Acquaint now thyself with him.'

THERE are several ways of doing this.

1. One is the *reading of the Bible.* In the Bible God is speaking to us. It is not only a revelation of His will concerning us, not only the revealing of the things man is to believe concerning God, or of the duties God requires of man; it is a revelation of God Himself. When a friend writes to a friend, a lover to his beloved, he reveals not only his thoughts and desires; in revealing these he reveals himself. God reveals Himself to us in His Word, in the Bible, in the letters of love He has written for us to read and re-read and meditate upon and enjoy. And this use of His Word is a precious means of spiritual acquaintance. This is what is meant when we speak of a devotional study of the Bible.

¶ A young lady, being asked what she meant by a devotional study of the Bible, replied: 'A few days ago I received a letter from a friend. I confess to you that I have read that letter over and over again; not because I did not understand it at first, nor because I wanted to commend myself to the writer of it, but because I have yielded myself, consecrated my life to him. Now when we read God's Word, His letter of love to us, in the same way, that is what I call a devotional reading of the Bible.'

2. Another way is *prayer.* Prayer is conversation with God. We increase the measure of acquaintance with one another through conversation. The same means will increase our acquaintance with God. Not only do we increase our acquaintance with God through prayer, but prayer is necessary in order to maintain the intimacy with Him we have already found, and the graces that have come through that intimacy.

A celebrated musician once said, 'If I quit the piano one day I notice it; if I quit it for two days my friends notice it; if I quit it for three days the public notice it.' Thus it is with our communion with God in prayer. The world, our friends and we ourselves sustain a loss if our prayers cease or are intermittent. We must keep up our habits of prayer, and grow in the art of prayer, if we would acquaint ourselves with God and open ourselves to the secrets He is ready to reveal to us if we will cultivate intimacy with Him.

3. A third way is *meditation.* Meditation

[1] R. F. Horton.

is to the mind what digestion is to the body. If we would profit by that which we read or hear, it must go through the mental process of assimilation. It must go through the process St. Paul suggested when he said to Timothy: 'Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them.' God has many secrets to reveal to all those who will come near enough to hear them, or will be still long enough to hear. There is a beautiful figure of speech in a verse in the twenty-fifth Psalm: 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.' The term rendered 'secret' is, in the original Hebrew tongue, 'a whisper.' When a humble and teachable soul is near to God, He often tells it a secret. He whispers in the attentive Christian's ear some sweet word of promise or love which no one else can hear, perhaps which no one else could understand.

4. A fourth way is *sorrow*. Some people never learn to know Christ really until they experience His sympathy and tenderness and love in the time of sorrow. In sorrow Christ becomes a necessity to us. He becomes a reality. We come to know Him then. Through our tears we see Him in a new light. Through pain we feel a new touch of His hand. Through the tumult of our afflictions we perceive a new tenderness in His voice and a new softness in the arms beneath us. A man once said: 'I never saw until I was blind.' Not until this affliction came upon him did he really see God, have his spiritual eyes opened. There are many who never saw God so plainly, knew Him so well, came into such close and loving fellowship with Him, as they did after coming into acquaintance with Him through sorrow.

5. A fifth way is *service*. We may learn of God in His Word, see Him in His works, come into touch with Him through prayer and meditation and even through sorrow, yet not really know Him in the truest sense until we come to know Him through service, through placing ourselves at His bidding, running on His errands, identifying ourselves with His plans and purposes for men, for saving and soothing and helping men. This is necessary to the forming of the most intimate friendship, for there is an element of obedience, of self-yielding, of identifying ourselves with God, in service, that cannot be found in mere passive relations toward Him. In other words, we need to be really tested by means of service, before we can truly say: 'I know in whom I believe.' [1]

Oh, at the point where God and man are one,
Meet me, Thou God; flame on me like the sun;
I would be part
Of Thine own heart,
That by my hands Thy love-deeds may be done:

That by my hands Thy love-truths may be shown
And far lands know me for Thy very own;
That I may bring
The dead world spring:—
The flowers awake, Lord, at Thy word alone.

Oh, to the point where man and God unite,
Raise me, Thou God; transfuse me with Thy light;
Where I would go
Thou, God, dost know;
For Thy sake I will face the starless night.[2]

Where is God?

Job xxiii. 3.—'Oh that I knew where I might find him.'

This is a very old problem, and it has been reflected in the literature of all the centuries. There is a story told about Thomas Carlyle in a very gloomy period of his life, when he had lost hold upon faith of any kind. Froude was speaking to him about religion, and saying that he could believe only in a God who did something; and Froude himself tells us that Carlyle, 'with a cry of pain which I shall never forget, said, "He does nothing" '. There are many people to-day, perhaps not as daring in speech as Carlyle, who are nevertheless thinking the same thing.

1. Now all that order of thinking—the

[1] G. B. F. Hallock.
[2] George Barlow.

doubts, the rebellions—springs from a conception of God for which inadequate teaching is partially responsible. Most men and women seem to regard God as one who reigns in a place far above the clouds, who is separated from us by great distances of space, and whose Being and dwelling-place is the home of peace and rest. That is something like the picture which men carry in their minds; and let us remember that these mental pictures are stronger in a way than all our mature reasoning. With that picture in mind it is hard to find any reality in God when life becomes bleak and solitary. When tears sting our eyes the thought of God's remoteness in His heaven makes Him unreal. When we are battling down here for right and truth at an awful cost in pain it does not help us to lift our eyes to the calmness of the stars and from their impassiveness form a picture of the Kingdom above. The tasks of the world absorb us, and our craving is for a God who is Himself in the midst of the battle. That is where men want to find Him. The conventional picture does not help them. It rather obstructs and hinders their faith. It gives them the impression of remoteness, of God as a mere spectator of the conflict.

2. But this conventional presentation was never the teaching of Christianity. It may have been the blunder of Christian teachers; they have given a false impression. The whole emphasis of the New Testament falls upon life as a struggle, a contest in which not only men are engaged, but powers above and beyond men. In that struggle God takes the supreme part. He is in the very midst of it. What is the truth of the Incarnation but this, that God comes Himself into the midst of man's struggles, takes upon Himself the form of a servant, and in man and as man fights man's battles both with him and for him? A God who struggles? Where in any world religion will you find that truth expressed save in the gospel of Christ? It is its dominant note. Other religions may give you God in word, in teaching, in an idea of life; in Christ there is God in act. Christ is God doing things. The very essence of Christianity is that it is more than a treatise, it is a drama wrought out in the midst of history. To the sad and strained hearts of to-day there is only one satisfying clue to the question, What is God doing? and that clue is in the Cross itself. What does the Cross mean but that God is in the midst of the world's struggle bearing the cost of it in pain, and there not as the victim, but as the victor? There are mysteries about it, of course, mysteries which cannot be set forth in clear-cut explanations, but the deeper we enter into life's meaning the more does the Cross seem the only satisfying revelation of God.

I do not look for God among the eternal solitudes to-day, amid the calm peace of the stars, in the blue of the heavens. Even as figures for His dwelling-place I put them aside. I find Him rather in the agony of strong men, in the heroism of patient women, in the human struggle to get wrong things righted, in the human willingness to pay the price of the transaction. I cannot apply it in detail, and I find no need of doing so. But I know that if my eyes could be opened to behold the truth of things, I should find God not remote but very near, not outside the struggle of to-day, but at the heart of it. For the Cross, which in one aspect of it was but an incident in history for which there is a place and a date, localized there on 'the green hill without a city wall,' is infinitely more than that. It is the sign of what is always true; it is the picture of what God is now.

¶ Listen to John Wesley on his deathbed: Finding we could not understand what he said he paused a little, and then with all the remaining strength he had, cried out, 'The best of all is, God is with us';—and then, as if to assert the faithfulness of our promise-keeping Jehovah, and comfort the hearts of his weeping friends, lifting up his dying arm in token of victory, and raising his feeble voice with a holy triumph not to be expressed, again repeated the heart-reviving words, 'The best of all is, God is with us!'

3. Is there, then, no inspiration in this truth? God is at work in the world, only He is at work in and through men. Look up to the

peace of the heavens above and you may find it hard to realize that God is there while the turmoil of life is all around you. God is in the midst of the world's life, using men as His instruments. At the very time when Carlyle said 'God does nothing' Lincoln was striking the chains from the limbs of the slave, and Mazzini was setting Western Europe ablaze with the fire of a new hope. We who stand apart from that age can see its greatness, we can discover now how God was working then. Must men always be blind to the fact of God's presence in their own day? Must our sense of God always belong to what is past?

'Oh that I knew where I might find Him.' That is the cry of the soul in need. Ah, but He is not far and out of reach! He is near; He is within. Call upon Him and He will answer. Lean your weakness on Him and there will be support. Put faith to the test and it will not fail you. Go to life in God's name; you will find Him there.[1]

¶ If you would see God look for Him in the very thing in which unfaith says He cannot be found. Look for Him in the wail of human need which is the cry of self-discovery for ampler, grander life; the beasts do not know it, even though they know hunger and fear. Look for Him in the glory of man, the glory which would be no glory if there were nothing to overcome. Look for Him in the brave battles with wrong that are being fought the wide world over. Look for Him in the very defeats that occasionally call for higher qualities than victory. Look for Him in that in you which bids you rise and war with the ills from which your brethren suffer and make an end of them. Look for Him in the patience, and sweetness, and tenderness, and lowly beauty of work-a-day human life. Bless Him for the great things He is showing you at your own fireside, and in the doings of those who are your own flesh and blood. Whenever you hear or read of aught that brings a tear of pity to your eye or awakens a feeling of reverence in your heart for what has been suffered and wrought by man, trust your own instincts; that is God. You have found that which lives eternally, and because of which you yourself shall never die.[1]

What is the token
Ever unbroken,
Swept down the spaces of querulous years,
Weeping or singing,
That the beginning
Of all things is with us and sees us and hears?
What is the token
Bruisèd and broken,
Bend I my life to a blossoming rod?
Shall then the worst things
Come to the first things,
Finding the best of all, last of all, God?

[1] S. M. Berry.

A Lost God.

Job xxiii. 3.—'Oh that I knew where I might find him.'

So Job had lost God.

Now a man may lose God just by neglecting Him. In his inward relations with the soul, God, so to speak, does not thrust Himself upon the soul. He—so we must speak of such things—He sometimes stands aside and apart, while persons and things take that possession of the soul which rightly belongs to Him. And then, after a time, the silly soul comes to itself, and wakens up to see and to feel its bitter loss. 'God,' says John Donne, in a great sermon on this subject, 'God is like us in this also, that He takes it worse to be slighted, to be neglected, to be left out, than to be actually injured. Our inconsideration, our not thinking of God in our actions, offends Him more than our sins.' 'Pardon,' cries Bishop Wilson, in his *Sacra Privata*, 'pardon, that I have passed so many days without acknowledging and confessing Thy wonderful goodness to the most unworthy of Thy servants. Preserve in my soul, O God, such a constant and clear sense of my obligations to Thee, that upon every new receipt of Thy favour I may immediately turn my eyes to Him from whom cometh my salvation.' Another, in his evening prayer in his family, says this: 'We have fled from Thee seeking us:

[1] R. J. Campbell.

we have neglected Thee loving us: we have stopped our ears to Thee speaking to us: we have forgotten Thee doing good to us: we have despised Thee correcting us.' Thus confess before God Andrewes and Donne and Wilson.

Conversing the other day with one of my own people, about the life of God in the soul, he took me aside, and told me this. I have his permission to tell it to anyone to whom it may be a blessing to hear it. It was last summer, when our congregation was scattered about, up and down the country, and when some of the home restraints were sitting somewhat loose on some of our people. The first three weeks of his holiday—he gave me the exact names and dates—he never had such a close walk with God during all the thirty years—off and on—that he has known God. But he had an invitation to spend ten days with one of ourselves; and he set out, so he told me, to keep his engagement, with some misgivings of heart that the visit would be too much for him. But, as it happened, it turned out far worse for him than anything he had anticipated. Such was the company of which the house was full; such were the conversations that were permitted and encouraged; such were the books that were read, and that were never read; such was the eating and the drinking; and such was the keeping of the Sabbath, that, what with one thing and what with another, he told me that he had read little else but the penitential Psalms and the Book of Job ever since, so exactly does that Book describe his desolate estate to-day. Now, whether it was his too great complaisancy with the secular-minded company; or, whether it was the part he took, or did not take, in the conversations; or whether it was the talk about their absent friends, and the fault-finding, and the detraction, of which that house is notoriously full; or whether it was that he had come away and left at home his books and papers, his habits in secret that so help him to keep his communion with God; or whether it was his miskeeping of the two Sabbaths that he was there—he did not particularize to tell me: and his soul was too much in hell already for me to ask. Only, he came and he went; and no one in that crowded house knew any more what was passing in that man's soul than Job's four friends knew the secret of the Lord with His chastened servant. In ways like these—in ways that nobody would believe—men among ourselves also are crying to God night and day in agony: 'Oh that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat!'

Now, when we set out to seek for anything that we have lost, we do not go gaping about anywhere and everywhere. We go straight to the place where we lost it. We retrace our steps to the exact spot where we wakened up to miss the things we now value and miss so much. Go back, then, to that sad house where God, in His anger at you, forsook you. On what day? at what hour? On what occasion was it? Was it when you were sitting at table, and forgetting yourself? Was it during that ever-to-be-lamented and never-to-be-recalled conversation? Was it at that moment when the golden rule leapt too late into your mind? You would not have believed it beforehand that Almighty God would have descended to take notice of such trifles. That He would have taken a passing indiscretion in eating, and drinking, and conversation, so much to heart! and would have kept it up so long against you—you would not have believed it, if you had not yourself experienced it. No! But He has taken you this time out of all men's hands into His own hands. And, on your own admission, He is teaching you a lesson, this time, that you will not soon forget. He will teach you that there is nothing He takes so mighty ill at your hand as just the way you transgress against your brother, and let other men transgress against him, when you are his only friend. A new commandment—He has said to you at a hundred communion tables—that you do to others as you would they did to you. But God does not cast off for ever: all God's people will testify and tell you. No. But you will have to seek Him with many bitter complaints against yourself this time, and with very determined intentions and resolutions for the time to come.

Would you know, then, where you may have

any hope to find Him? Would you come this day to His seat? Would you have it again, between Him and you, as it was in months past, and as it was in the days when God preserved you? Well—come this way. Try this door. Deny yourself. 'Mortify your members, which are on the earth.' Take up your cross daily in that thing concerning which God has had a controversy with you in your conscience secretly ever since. Was it in eating or drinking? Was it in bad temper? Was it in envy and ill-will? Was it in that sweet conversation in which you sat and spoke such unanimous things to the depreciation and damage of your brother? If it was, try this. Go straight to your brother to-day: or take pen and ink, and tell him that you have not had a dog's life with God ever since. 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord: and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.'[1]

Finding God.

Job xxiii. 3.—'Oh that I knew where I might find him.'

A good many years ago some members of one of the Colleges in Cambridge were holding classes for men in the town in literature and history. At the close of one of the courses the lecturer invited the men to suggest subjects for the following term. After a pause of silence one of the men shyly muttered something inaudible. The lecturer went down to him, and asked what he had said. It was this, 'We want you to tell us something about Jesus Christ.'

Now I believe that if a similar offer were made to-day to any congregation a good many would say, 'We want you, sir, to tell us something about God.' I say this because for years past, and specially of late, I have noted that when thinking people talk or write about the difficult questions involved in faith, they come, sooner or later, to the fundamental question, 'What is the truest conception we can form of God?' 'Tell us about God, Padre,' is what soldiers on service again and again said to their chaplains.[1]

Now, we are in possession of three sets of senses through which the Infinite reveals Himself to us.

1. First of all, there is what we call our *physical senses.* Through these windows we call eyes we look out upon the heavens, spangled with millions of shimmering worlds, upon the earth with its mountains and valleys and mighty rivers flowing to the sea; upon forests whose waving treetops seem to brush the loitering clouds; upon fields with growing grain or grazing herds; upon the human form so graceful, and the human face so divine—and in all this we see God. We listen to the sounds which greet our ears, the voices which speak to us from near and far; the deep-toned roar of ocean waves, the silvery splashing of running brooks, the songs of happy birds; the music of the human voice—to all the vibrations above us, beneath us, around us; and in all this we hear Him speak. In the odours we inhale Him; in the flowers we behold Him; and in everything we touch and handle we are confronted with the fact that our Father lives. So that, if we want to get away from His presence, we shall first have to close our eyes and stop our ears—become absolutely insensible to every sensation that comes to us through the senses. This thought was in the mind of the poet when, in tones of surprise and indignation, he exclaimed:

No God! the simplest flower
That on the wild is found,
Shrieks as it drinks its cup of dew,
And trembles at the sound.

No God! astonished echo cries
From out her cavern hoar,
And every wandering bird that flies
Reproves the atheist lore.

The solemn forest lifts its head
The Almighty to proclaim:

[1] A. Whyte, *Lord, Teach us to Pray,* 80ff.

[1] J. M. Wilson, *Christ's Thought of God,* 3.

The brooklet in its crystal urn
Doth leap to grave His name.

High swells the deep and vengeful sea
Along its billowy track;
And red Vesuvius opes its mouth
To hurl the falsehood back.

No God! with indignation high
The fervent sun is stirred,
And the pale moon grows paler still,
At such impious word.

And from their burning thrones
The stars look down with angry eyes
That thus a worm of dust should mock
Eternal Majesty.

2. But God reveals Himself through a second set of senses, which we call *mental and moral consciousness.* The primary witness to God is in myself. It is my sense of personality. It is my free will. It is my conviction of the awful sacredness of right and duty. It is the appeal of conscience. It is the solemn, haunting feeling of responsibility. It is the yearning of my soul after holiness. It is the thrill of sacred emotion, which in my best moments is stirred within me by a voice sweeter and stronger than any voice of earth. This, this is God. The witness of the moral consciousness has always been accredited.

¶ Away back in the dark days before Jesus came, before the light of the gospel was sent streaming over the earth, pagan philosophers accepted the force of its testimony. You remember Cato's words. After he had studied patiently what his friend, Plato, had written concerning the supernatural life and immortality, the pagan is represented as saying:

It must be so,
Plato, thou reasonest well.
Else whence this pleasing hope,
This fond desire,
This longing after immortality?
Or whence this secret dread and inward horror
Of sinking into naught?
Why shrinks the soul back on itself
And startles at destruction?
'Tis divinity which stirs within us,
'Tis heaven itself that points out a hereafter,
And indicates eternity to man.

And in much the same strain Longfellow sings in his *Hiawatha:*

Every human heart is human,
That in even savage bosoms
There are longings, yearnings, strivings
For the good they comprehend not,
That the feeble hands and helpless,
Groping blindly in the darkness,
Touch God's right hand in that darkness
And are lifted up and strengthened.[1]

3. But there is a third set of senses through which this revelation comes. These we call the *spiritual senses.* Coming to this point, the cry of the soul is no longer, 'Oh that I knew where I might find him!' but, 'I have found Him! I have found Him!' Very near unto God have we come. His hand has been laid in tenderness upon our head. He has told us of His love. 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest,' He said. And we came to Him with all our sins. The burden rolled off. The shackles were shattered. Out of bondage we came. We were free! The peace of God which passeth understanding was ours. So that while there are many speculative theories which we cannot understand, and many theological intricacies which we can not explain, yet, like the poor man upon whose blind eyes the Saviour poured the light of day, we can say, 'One thing I know.' There are many things I do not know. There are many things which, with my limitations, I can not know. But, 'One thing I know; whereas I was blind, now I see.' I have a vision of God through the eyes of faith.

¶ The night grows late. I rise to close my outer door to shut myself out from the world; I shall have no more visitors now. The moonlight lies cold and clear on the little court; the shadow of the cloister pillars falls black on the pavement. Outside, the town lies hushed in sleep; I see the gables and chimneys of the clustered houses standing in a quiet dream over the old ivy-covered wall. The

[1] J. F. Berry.

college is absolutely still, though one or two lights still burn in studious rooms, and peep through curtained chinks. What a beautiful place to live one's life in, a place which greets one with delicate associations, with venerable beauty, at every turn! The moonlight falls through the tall oriel of the Hall, and the armorial shields burn and glow with rich points of colour. I pace to and fro, wondering, musing. All here seems so permanent, so still, so secure, and yet we are spinning and whirling through space to some unknown goal. What are the thoughts of the mighty unresting Heart, to whose vastness and agelessness the whole mass of these flying and glowing suns are but as a handful of dust that a boy flings upon the air? How has He set me here, a tiny moving atom, yet more sure of my own minute identity than I am of all the vast panorama of things which lie outside of me? Has He indeed a tender and a patient thought of me, the frail creature whom He has moulded and made? I do not doubt it; I look up among the star-sown spaces, and the old aspiration rises in my heart. 'Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even into His presence!' How would I go, like a tired and sorrowful child to his father's knee, to be comforted and encouraged, in perfect trust and love, to be raised in His arms, to be held to His heart! He would but look in my face, and I should understand without a question, without a word.

Now in its mouldering turret the old clock wakes and stirs, moves its jarring wires, and the soft bell strikes midnight. Another of my few short days gone, another step nearer to the unseen. Slowly but not sadly I return, for I have been for a moment nearer God; the very thought that rises in my mind, and turns my heart to His, comes from Him. He would make all plain, if He could; He gives us what we need; and when we at last awake we shall be satisfied.[1]

Most hidden and most manifest:
O Thou my unworthy bosom's guest,
Tho' Thou fillest highest Heaven,
Thou this grace to me hast given;
That I know Thee in my breast—
Most hidden and most manifest.

Most hidden and most manifest:
Let carping Unbelief protest,
Thou, lowliest believer, know'st,
Thou, lowliest believer, show'st
With him Thou still art pleased to rest—
Most hidden and most manifest.

Most hidden and most manifest:
Faith yet succeedeth in its quest;
And the peace all peace surpassing,
Sweetest peace of Jesus glassing;
Thy Holy Spirit doth attest—
Most hidden and most manifest.

[1] A. C. Benson, *From a College Window*, 324.

Man Seeking God: God Seeking Man.

Job xxiii. 3.—'Oh that I knew where I might find him.'

Men want a God who knows the end from the beginning, who neither fumbles nor fails, a God who feels and cares, a God who looks out upon the world with the kind eyes of Christ, who is able to satisfy all our cravings and fulfil all our aspirations. It is this God or none, now that we have looked upon the face of Jesus, of whom the world is in quest, and the cry of the human heart is, 'O that I knew where I might find him.' Moreover, there is that within us, and making itself felt in our experience soon or late, which will not allow us to abandon our seeking.

But I have always had one lode-star; now,
As I look back, I see that I have halted
Or hastened as I looked towards that star—
A need, a trust, a yearning after God.

1. So these words of Job are as the very sigh of the human heart, asking the deepest question of life. Men have always been conscious of God, as Job was, sure that He was near, and sure also, like Job, that in Him would be the solution of every difficulty and the explanation of every mystery. The race has been haunted by God. St. Paul's words to the Athenians on Mars' Hill are a true reading of history, and a true reading of human

nature—that all men are so constituted by essential nature that they should seek the Lord if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us. It is the explanation of the altar with the inscription, 'To the Unknown God.' It is the deepest philosophy of human history. Even when men have no definite knowledge of God they are forced by the very needs of their nature, driven by inner necessity, to reach out after God. Though, like Job, when they go forward He is not there, and backward they cannot perceive Him. On the left hand and on the right hand they cannot see Him, yet they are doomed to seek Him, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him.

Man is a religious being, it is in his blood; he feels himself related to a power above Him, and knows himself a spirit longing for fellowship with the Divine. Thus religion is universal, found at all stages of human history and all ages. All the varied forms of religion, all its institutions, all its sorts of worship, are witnesses to this conscious need which the race has for God. Wherever man is, there is religion, born of man's needs and aspirations; everywhere man appeals to a power above him, bends to an authority over him, moves in a resistless desire towards a fellowship with the unseen for which instinctively he feels himself fit. It is as truly in response to his nature as seeking food is in response to natural hunger. The altar with the inscription, 'To the Unknown God,' is set up in the deep heart of man. All the religions of the world that have been and that are bear witness that Job's longing is in some form or other universal. 'Oh that I knew where I might find him!'

The true explanation is the Biblical one—that man is made in the image of God, that in spirit he is akin to the eternal Spirit, that there is no great gulf fixed between God and man which cannot be bridged over. Man was created in the likeness of God, and was born a child of God. Fellowship is possible, therefore, since there is no inherent incapacity; there is something in man which corresponds to qualities in God. The conclusion, which is the instinctive faith of man, is that spirit with spirit can meet. God entered into a relation of love and Fatherhood with man, man entered into a relationship of love and sonship with God. Certain it is that man can never give up the hope and the desire, and must be orphaned and desolate until he does so find God. Every prayer that has broken from the lips of men, every vision of light that has gleamed in the eyes of men, every ache of high desire that has touched the hearts of men is testimony to this, and is but a variant of Job's longing. Possible or no, that need remains, and no material achievement or mental attainment will compensate for failing to find God and to live in fellowship with Him.

¶ Even the cynical man of the world who has grown weary of believing possesses this feeling in the shape of a doubt, a wonder, a sense of dissatisfaction and discontent. Listen to him. He says, 'Our little, fleeting, human life is a grey and mean and worthless thing.' How did he find that out—how does he know? What is his standard of judgment? According to his own account human civilization is the best thing the clash of material forces has yet produced. What secret better thing does he know of, against which he measures it and calls it mean and worthless? Does not his very speech betray the Divine discontent—the instinct of his heart that there is some higher spiritual life, of which this our human life falls miserably short? Hundreds of atheisms and materialisms have shouted to men, 'Banish the name of God, extirpate the *feeling* of God from your souls.' 'They might as well,' says Francis Newman, 'attempt to forbid the sense of infinity as we look up into the midnight sky, or of eternity as we gaze on the everlasting mountains.' No—those voices of the soul refuse to be suppressed. Ever anew they break forth in us crying, 'My soul is haunted with the sense of the presence of God. God is. God is one—the all-pervading Oversoul. God is my true Home. I seek for God. I thirst for God—thirst for more intimate communion than I now enjoy. Oh, that I knew where I might find Him—that I might come even to His seat.[1]

[1] J. A. Robertson, *Concerning the Soul*, 102.

2. If it be true, as it is true, that man has ever sought God, it is a deeper fact still that God has ever sought man. The deep of man's desire has been answered by the deep of God's mercy. For every reaching forth of man there has been the stooping down of God. History is more than the story of the human soul seeking God; in a truer and more profound sense still it is the record of God seeking the soul. The very fact that men have asked with some measure of belief, though struck almost with doubt at the wonder of it, 'Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?' is because God has dwelt with men. has entered into terms of communion. The history of man's attainment is the history of God's self-revelation. It is solely because God has been seeking man that man has stretched out groping hands if haply he might feel after Him and find Him. Faith has survived just because it justifies itself and because it embodies itself in experience. Every effort of man after God is but a response to the Divine summons, but the thrilling of man to the touch of God. Religious history is not only the dim and blundering reaching-out of man's intelligence towards the mystery of the unknown, it is rather the history of God approaching man, revealing His will to man, declaring Himself, offering relations of trust and fellowship.

Take the record of the Bible, and this is the interpretation which all the men of God have put upon the facts of this consciousness—that God all through was leading His people, educating them in the higher life, creating spiritual material out of them, setting forth His nature and will and love to them. In divers manners and at sundry times He spake by the prophets, and it was of Himself that He spake, offering the terms of a covenant of love and of trust; and in these last days He hath spoken unto us by His Son. It was primarily of God the Son spoke by teaching and by life, by what He was and did as well as by what He said. If Christ has given expression to the character of God, if He has revealed the Father, has He not consciously, conclusively, proved to us that the Divine attitude is that of seeking men, striving to establish permanent relations of devotion and love? He has also given us the assurance that to respond to God's love is to know Him, the assurance that to seek Him is to find Him, so that no longer need we ask in half despair, 'Oh, that I knew where I might find Him.'

If we see God, as we surely can, as we surely do, in the face of Jesus Christ, the true picture is not man lost in the dark, not man seeking God, his home, with palsied steps and groping hands. The true picture is the seeking God, come in Christ to seek and save the lost.[1]

The Lord lacketh nothing; yet He asketh—
Asketh of me, my heart;
He lacketh nothing; yet Himself tasketh—
Tasketh, to fill the part
Of seeking Shepherd, over dale and height,
For each of His 'lost sheep';
Asking and seeking, with many a sleight
Of love; yea, He doth weep.

The Lord lacketh nothing; yet He encasqueth—
Encasqueth His head with thorns;
That He might die for us; and damasketh
Damasketh, 'midst men's scorns
His hands—His feet—His side, with His blood;
Love all love excelling;
And still, before His cross, our race has stood,
This vast love repelling.

The Lord lacketh nothing; yet He asketh—
Asketh of me, my heart;
He lacketh nothing; yet Himself tasketh—
Tasketh, to fill the part
Of seeking Shepherd, over dale and height,
For each of His 'lost sheep';
Asking and seeking, with many a sleight
Of love; yea, He doth weep.[2]

[1] Hugh Black.
[2] A. B. Crosart, *Songs of the Day and Night*, 56.

A Hidden God.

Job xxiii. 8, 9.—'Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.'

How many simple folk there are, people of religious temper too, who in the day of trouble have to confess, like the righteous Job, that God remains invisible, and they cannot discover His presence!

> He hides Himself so wondrously,
> As though there were no God;
> He is least seen when all the powers
> Of ill are most abroad.
>
> Or He deserts us at the hour
> The fight is all but lost,
> And seems to leave us to ourselves
> Just when we need Him most.

This is an experience which has nothing of philosophic speculation in it or of irreligion either. Many a true saint of God, like our blessed Master in Gethsemane, has been utterly deprived for a season of the consolation of conscious communion with the eternal. In such an event the lonely sufferer seldom pauses to balance pros and cons as to whether there is a God or not. In his despair he may even be driven to exclaim that there cannot be a God; but the real feeling at the bottom of his heart all the time is an unquenchable yearning for assurance of God's pity and love; and, like a child that has lost its mother in a crowd, the wail goes up from the orphaned soul, 'Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.'

¶ I have discovered in the course of my ministry that there are persons of true religious nature and spiritual capacity who somehow never quite manage to be sure of God, are never able to enter the holy of holies, and commune with Him face to face. But neither do they ever get away from Him; all their lives through they remain, as it were, in the outer course of the sanctuary, looking wistfully toward the glory of the Shekinah which is veiled from their vision.[1]

1. Now in the field of spiritual experience there have been some rare souls who have attained to a certitude concerning God and the essential goodness of life the revelation of which is of inestimable value to mankind. And the most striking thing about it is that there is a wonderful unity in the testimony thus given. They all say very much the same thing. All the great saints and mystics have declared that they have found the way to the very presence of God, and they agree in their descriptions as to the nature of that way and the dangers and obstacles in which it abounds. From Bernard of Clairvaux to Bunyan and Wesley the story is always the same. Why then waste time in vain discussions as to whether and what God may be when you can know for yourself beyond all question that He is? The way to God is Christ, and there never has been any other way. But to follow that way, the Christ way, is to leave behind you one by one, however hard the effort or high the cost, every desire of the natural man which you know to be inconsistent with that love of Christ which passeth knowledge and which is the first word of creation as it is the last of redemption, the alpha and omega of the life and work of God.

¶ There have been times in my life, as in the lives of most people, I suppose, who are trying to live in fellowship with Christ, 'who is the image of the invisible God,' when I have been specially sure of the Master's presence—hours of close personal communion, seasons of exceptional uplift and illumination. I would not like to enter into any detailed description of these experiences, nor could I make much of it if I did. I will say no more than that I have been just as sure of the Divine presence and blessing as I am sure of my own existence. One cannot absolutely command the privilege, nor can one understand why it should be granted at one time and not at another; indeed there have been many

[1] R. J. Campbell.

times when one would have given a great deal for even a glimpse of it, and it came not. But this is the reason why I mention it: in all hours of darkness and difficulty, when the pathway is obscured and the consciousness of God's help seems to be withheld, and, indeed, to be as though it had never been, and as though He had hidden His face for ever, I say to myself over and over again, 'But the Master did speak to me; He did speak to me on such and such a day, and His word was with power; I knew it then, knew it beyond all doubt, and therefore I know it now, and will trust it and walk in the strength of it till His light shines again.' [1]

2. But the way to find God stands open to any who choose to seek it. According to the poem whence our text is taken, Job himself found that way in the end when he humbled himself before the Most High saying, 'I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' It is a strange law this, but immutable, that he who would dwell with God must abandon all self-sufficiency of whatsoever kind or degree. The honest seeker obtains glimpses of the face of God ever and anon, so to speak, but never does he come to know God face to face until by long discipline and struggle he has learned the secret of perfect self-surrender. We cannot explain it; we do not know the reason why the price to be paid for it is so often terribly heavy; all we know is that

> Who would unto God's Kingdom come
> Must enter by this door.

There are just two brief observations to make about this. The first is that if we are willing to walk this road of Christ, this *via crucis,* this way that leadeth unto life, we shall infallibly come to have a vision of God. And the second is that as we continue to follow Christ in this heavenward pilgrimage, despite the drawback of our frailty and sin, God will reveal Himself to us sweetly and helpfully at intervals on the road as we have need.

> I saw a band of pilgrims, nearly all
> Bearing a cross-shaped load, or great or small;
> Though two there were who seemed to have no weight
> To bend their shoulders or impede their gait;
> Methought that many envied their estate.
>
> The first unladen one stepped quickly on
> Towards the City gleaming in the sun.
> The other lingered by the dusty way
> Until the evening shadows chased the day,
> And she could sob unseen her life away.
>
> I turned to watch the foremost pilgrim draw
> Near to the City's gates, and then I saw
> A cross of burnished gold upon her laid;
> The stoutest heart might well have been afraid
> To try its weight, yet *she* seemed undismayed.
>
> Nay more, she carried it with lifted head,
> And steps fleet as before, the pilgrims said;
> At which I marvelled greatly, till I saw
> She took no step alone; Another bore
> The burden at her side o'er hill and moor.
>
> And when they reached at length the City's gate,
> She needed not to stand and knock and wait,
> For His Hand held the key; and so she passed
> Into the haven of her soul at last!
> But *He* turned back to face the wintry blast.
>
> And then I saw Him succour all who cried
> For His dear help; to none was it denied,
> Excepting those who chose to walk alone.
> Ah, foolish ones! The night winds sob and moan
> Around your pathway, whence the Light has flown! [1]

[1] R. J. Campbell.

The Left Hand.

Job xxiii. 9.—'On the left hand, where he doth work.'

So God is a working God. We have but to open our Bible to find how this great truth runs as the soul of its teaching all through its pages. In every form of language, in regard to every mode of life, in relation to

[1] Harriet E. Colvile.

all events, God is represented as the great Worker, primarily the sole Worker, in whose will all other activities originate and are. 'He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.'

Events which are held to be quite independent of all special causation, the Bible puts into the hand of God. 'He maketh the sun to shine.' 'He sendeth the rain.' 'He maketh the grass to grow.' 'He giveth snow like wool.' 'He holdeth the winds in his fist.' 'The lightnings go before him.' 'Fire and hail, snow and vapour,' and the 'stormy wind' fulfil 'his word.' All material forces, as they are set into action and get their interplay in the management of the worlds, are the servants of God and do His bidding; and they are forces only so far and so long as they are the channels of His will. A change in the direction of the latter, a suspension in the purposes of God—and all material activities perish. They are the outflow of His intelligence, uniformities which mark the action of the supreme Will: 'I the Lord do all these things.'

Now this working God works on the left hand as well as on the right.

1. The left hand has always and everywhere typified *what is undesired.* 'The left' is the term by which the Opposition is described in the Parliaments of the Continent of Europe. A left-handed marriage is a German name for a morganatic marriage. We often use the word 'sinister,' forgetting that it means the left hand. We say, 'That was a sinister remark,' or 'That was sinister conduct.' So the left hand has given us one of our most expressive epithets by which what is morally unworthy is described. Left-handedness is also a common synonym for insincerity and for maliciousness.

In temporal matters we often discover the operation of our loving God where all is adverse. Sinister experiences prove to be Divine experiences. When health fails, when business falls off, when friends cast us aside, when sorrow darkens our home, when causes languish which we dearly love—on the left hand God doth work. How sanguine such a thought should make us! Here is a fountain of sanest optimism. We need not dread being driven to the left hand of life, if there we meet our redeeming God. The undesired is desirable if there the Father worketh.

2. The left hand is the popular parable of *the awkward.* It is a dictionary definition of the word 'awkward' that it is 'not dexterous.' So the right hand speaks of what is graceful, facile, and the left hand of that which is awkward. The 'left-handed man' is the awkward, clumsy, resourceless man. A 'left-handed compliment' is a compliment which is either intentionally or unintentionally awkward in that it conveys an implication the reverse of flattering.

We are ever apt to be called to the awkward experiences of life. Many of us are, perhaps, at this moment most awkwardly situated. Our location is 'on the left hand.' But God is located there too! It is 'where he doth work.' Life's awkward spheres would be unendurable but for this. Thousands have kept heart and hope 'on the left hand' because they have realized God's working in that uncouth region. The world's awkwardness would be its ruin but that on the left hand God doth work.

3. The left hand is, and always has been, the sign of *the unsuccessful.* From the beginning believers in 'luck' have deplored and denounced the left hand. They have always described it as unlucky. When the Roman augur found his birds appearing on the left hand they were unlucky omens to him. Instinctively we feel we need a God who will work in the latitudes of the unsuccessful. And such a God is the God of the Bible. God intervenes on behalf of those who fail. He cares for the beaten-in-life. He works for the disconsolate.

Some are socially unsuccessful. They do not shine. They are not courted. They score no triumphs. Commercially they do not flourish. Their bush bears few berries. Their rod rarely blossoms. Nevertheless, God cares for them. He works on the left hand, the place of their permanent residence. And many such have splendid visions of the Divine, and deep and sweet fellowship with heaven.

4. The left hand is the region where *hope is abandoned.* It is the country unillumined by the kindly light of anticipation. But where human hope is wanting God is not wanting. Job knew, if ever man did, what it was to be on the left hand, but he declares, 'He knoweth the way that I take. When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.' On the left hand he discovered the effectual working of God.

There is a gospel for all who dwell in the unhopeful land. Let the foreboding children of the left hand lift up their hearts! When temporalities are so disquieting that to hope seems to be mocking oneself, even then God works. There is always a bow in the darkest cloud. Whilst God abideth there is no cause for pessimism. When we are where every prospect is appalling, even there we shall behold the working of God.

'On the left hand, where he doth work'—they are wonderful words and worthy of the book. The greatness of the Book of Job, that which won for it from Carlyle the eulogium that it is the finest thing ever written with pen, consists in the clear light it throws on human trial and its issues. It is a unique manual upon faith—not in a proposition, but in life itself, because life is in the hands of God, and represents

> Machinery just meant
> To give thy soul its bent,
> Try thee, and turn thee forth sufficiently impressed,

as Browning with his glorious optimism has said. It teaches us an indescribable trust in the order of things. It does this through a great life—making a man, in his victorious struggle with adversity, provoke from our lips the saying, 'God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid.'

Trial.

Job xxiii. 10.—'When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.'

'LAST year I watched a merlin hovering above the meadows beyond our orchard. Georgina was with me.

'She's up to no good,' said I, and as she swooped downwards a lark rose swiftly out of a clump of reddening sorrel. Swiftly he ascended with the hawk in hot pursuit. Georgina took my hand and held it closely.

'Why is it?' she whispered, and I think I know all the questions on her mind. 'What has the poor little lark done?'

But I did not answer just then, and we watched the chase together. With all the strength of its wings the powerful creature strove to soar above the lark. At a great height, so that our heads were thrown back to watch it, it succeeded so far. Beneath it the lark was fluttering with trembling wings. I think we both then held our breath. It swooped downwards again, but with a swift flight the lark swerved out of reach, then closing its wings, it dropped like a falling stone and in a moment was hidden in the tall grass of the meadow once more.

I looked at Georgina.

'That's what it has done,' said I. 'It's learnt to nerve itself to a great effort. That lark now perhaps will rise above the mist, and find the sunshine where another one might fail.'

'I don't think they ought to be tried so much,' she said. 'Do you mean to say they wouldn't learn without?'[1]

How large and beneficent a part trial plays in life.

1. It comes to us all in youth. It comes into the life of the young man and woman just entering the world, when their education is completed, and their responsibility has begun. Up to their departure from home they have been loved and sheltered and helped. They have received all the care bestowed upon them as a matter of course, and when they leave the dear old roof, the parting day dawns bleak and unpropitious. They face a world of strangers. They realize that they must depend upon their own efforts. Clouds gather upon their sky, and yet before the day is over they will have proved that they can think for themselves, that they know what prudence is, not by reading about it, but by its actual prac-

[1] E. Temple Thurston, *The Open Window.*

tice, and that they know what life is, not by dreaming of it, but by attempting to live. That experience involves trial, yet it is amply justified in its issue. It gives an air of decision to us all. It calls our manhood and womanhood into a new dignity.

But darker days must also be measured by the standard of a worthy faith. There are days when the old home is broken up, and our very lives seem shattered, when those who loved us have passed into the fellowship which our imagination cannot picture, though our hearts must ever affirm it. It is an infinite loss. We can always fight well in the world when we can retreat from our battle to regain confidence through a father's sage counsel, or to find comfort in a mother's inexpressible love. These things are life to us. But when our loved ones have gone we know what loneliness means.

And yet we are not to be pitied. In such conditions God opens up a new opportunity for us. He teaches us initiative. We who have so often sought refuge must now forget our pain in giving refuge to others. All the strength, all the wisdom, and all the tenderness in our natures are unfolded. We become ministrant among our fellows, not by choice, but by necessity. We read in Isaiah, 'A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' He was thinking of men and women made strong and helpful through suffering. When this experience is granted to them we may all note that, even while God is making a desolation about them, He is endowing them with grandeur of character. And again the words are verified, 'He knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.'

¶ At that time I was at Leamington, and on the day when Mr. Cobden called upon me—for he happened to be there at the time on a visit to some relatives—I was in the depths of grief, I might almost say of despair, for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life, and a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called upon me as his friend, and addressed me, as you might suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said, 'There are thousands of houses in England at this moment where wives, mothers, and children are dying of hunger. Now,' he said, 'when the first paroxysm of your grief is past, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest till the Corn Law is repealed.' I accepted his invitation. I knew that the description he had given of the homes of thousands was not an exaggerated description. I felt in my conscience that there was a work which somebody must do, and therefore I accepted his invitation, and from that time we never ceased to labour hard on behalf of the resolution which we had made. Now, do not suppose that I wish you to imagine that he and I, when I say 'we,' were the only persons engaged in this great question. We were not even the first, though afterwards, perhaps, we became the foremost before the public. But there were others before us; and we were joined, not by scores, but by hundreds, and afterwards by thousands, and afterwards by countless multitudes; and afterwards famine itself, against which we had warred, joined us; and a great minister was converted, and minorities became majorities, and finally the barrier was entirely thrown down. And since then, though there has been suffering, and much suffering, in many homes in England, yet no wife and no mother and no little child has been starved to death as the result of a famine made by law.' [1]

2. But there are other forms of trial. Many have to battle with *adversity*. Shakespeare, with his clear and large outlook, has told us, 'Sweet are the uses of adversity.' And Seneca on this point has spoken words that deserve to be written in gold. 'No man knows his own strength or valour but by being put to the proof. The pilot is tried in a storm, the soldier in a battle, the rich man knows not how to behave himself in poverty. He that has lived only in popularity and applause knows not how he would bear infamy and

[1] *The Life of John Bright*, 43.

reproach. Calamity is the occasion of virtue, and a spur to a great mind. . . . Nay, many times a calamity turns to our advantage, and great ruins have made way for great glories. Prudence and religion are above accidents and draw good out of everything. Affliction keeps a man in use, and makes him strong, patient, and hardy.'

How clearly these words bear the imprint of a representative of the central society which shares God's secret! How like they are to the words of Christ, reminding us that we must take up our cross. It is a stern world in which we live, though it is kind. The price of free rational life is suffering, while the justification of suffering is progress.

'What made you a skald?' says a king to a poet, in one of Ibsen's plays.

'Sorrow, sire,' the skald answered.

Adversity baffles us only for the moment, and when we struggle with it, we find that we have been baffled to fight better. 'God loves us with a masculine love,' and sends us down into the battle of life to win our spurs. How good it is to cherish this conviction, and how fruitful to act upon it! Then we have the faith that enables us to overcome the world. We win the crown of life, instead of withering in the fool's paradise.

3. But there is another form of trial that comes to us from *ill-health,* when the body seems an actual fetter upon the mind. Our generation is resonant with cheap pessimisms, and perhaps nothing is held to justify them more than the facts of physical suffering. What is the good of it? Where is God? So we read; so we hear. But the significant thing is that the sufferers themselves do not speak in this fashion, even when they have the gift of genius with its great capacity for pain. They invariably exhibit a fine composure and fortitude. Who illustrated this fact better than Robert Louis Stevenson, in his brave fight with approaching death? He, of all men, had a good excuse for affirming that this is the worst possible world. Yet of such statements he writes in one of his inimitable essays:

'We are accustomed in these days to a great deal of puling over the circumstances in which we are placed. The great refinement of many poetical gentlemen has rendered them practically unfit for the jostling and ugliness of life, and they record their unfitness at considerable length. Young gentlemen with their three or four hundred a year of private means look down from a pinnacle of doleful experience on all the grown and hearty men who have dared to say a good word for life.'

Stevenson suggests that the pessimists of our day are not the children of sorrow, but rather epicures of their own emotions, who prate of an agony which they have not known. Sorrow is silent. There is a sanctuary of sorrow whose darkness is made sacred by the presence of the Love that endured the cross on our behalf. It is a fast of God's own appointing, and when men and women really enter upon it they can say with Christ, 'Not my will, but Thine be done!' They know that God is trying them that He may bring them forth as gold.

4. There is the trial that comes through *human ingratitude* or indifference. That seems hardest of all to bear. To do good, and call forth evil instead of responsive sympathy; to love, but yet in vain—that nearly breaks the heart. So we say. But is it really so? Does it not rather *make* the heart?

Those who have disappointed and tried us most bitterly have often, most of all, enabled us to transcend ourselves. The profoundest spiritual teachers in all ages have set forth this fact with great power. The wise editor of the Second Book of Samuel makes us feel that David realized supremely what fatherhood meant only when he learned that Absalom, who had outraged his heart and threatened his throne, had died in the rebellion he headed. Then the king, in all the ecstasy of his agony, and stirred by a love that touched heaven, cried, 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!'

No one can read these heart-purifying words without feeling convinced that the hour of spiritual agony was also an hour of achievement, that David found his heart through the treachery that broke it, and that resulted in

the death of the traitor. Modern seers have noted the same fact. In his poem, 'The Worst of It,' Browning makes a husband cry out, on hearing of the sin and shame of his wife:

Would it were I had been false, not you—
I that am nothing, not you that are all!

'All the saints must go to the proving house,' said one who had been often there himself; 'God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without trial.' None of us can hope to have exemption from a rule which is common to all the family. The corn must feel the stroke of the flail if we would know its yield; the grapes must be trodden in the press if we would get their wine; and the gold must go into the fire if we would assay and purify it.

But here is good news for those who have been sent to the 'proving house.' First, they will not be always there. No matter how long they may have been in it, each one of them may say with Job, 'I shall come forth.' The furnace will not blaze for ever. The Refiner will not keep us in it a moment longer than is necessary. Once our dross is purged away, and He begins to see His own image reflected in us, 'we shall come forth.'

And the trial will be sanctified to our benefit, for we shall come forth 'as gold.' We shall come out from the fiery process 'approved and improved,' as Matthew Henry puts it, 'found to be gold, and made to be better.' We shall lose nothing in the furnace but our worthlessness and our impurity.

¶ When Dr. Brown first preached he heard one woman saying to another about his sermon, 'Ah, 'twas very well, but it was almost all tinsel.' A short time after, the good preacher lost his wife; his heart was broken; his whole nature was affected; he struck deeper down into the truth; and when he preached again the same woman said to her friend, 'It is all gold now!' So, when for us also the discipline of life is perfected and we at last 'come forth,' angel voices will be heard to say, 'It is all gold now!'[1]

[1] S. L. Wilson.

The Wine of the Wicked.

Job xxiv. 6.—'They gather the vintage of the wicked.'

The Hebrew is literally 'The wicked gather the vintage.' And that gives the meaning clearly enough. Those that do evil (the tyrant or oppressor or simply the bad man) have their gathering time; they too bring home their vintage. The idea is of frequent occurrence in Scripture. We read of 'the pleasures of sin,' 'the song of the drunkard,' 'the laughter of the fool,' 'the triumphing of the wicked,' and 'the wages of unrighteousness.' The godless obtain what they aim at—enjoyment, luxury, mirth, song, power, fortune, renown. 'The glory of his house is increased'; 'his eyes stand out with fatness'; he clothes himself 'with scarlet,' decks himself 'with ornaments of gold,' and enlarges his 'eyes with paint.'

But wrongdoing is never more terrible than when it is successful, never more ghastly than when it is gay, never more expensive than when it pays, never more tragical than when it is glorious.

1. Successful sin *obscures our highest beliefs.* Sin of any kind has a tendency to spoil the inward vision; by a subtle law it tells on the soul's sensibility. It makes it difficult for us to see the things unseen, to grasp the higher truths by which we live. If an astronomer is to be equal to the utmost refinements of astronomical observation, he must be very careful about the personal equation, and come to the telescope in his best mental and physical condition. A distinguished astronomer is said 'to abstain from everything which could affect the nervous system—from narcotics, alcohol, coffee, and whatever else might unfit him for accuracy of observation.' Great is the difficulty of seeing, and strict abstemiousness is essential in those who would discern the more delicate phenomena of the heavens. How much truer is it, then, that spiritual vision is determined by our modes of thinking and living! If the great truths which are higher than the heavens are to become per-

fectly lucid, we must approach them with sincerity and purity of heart. Here everything depends upon the personal equation. As cigar smoke will cloud the stars, and a sip of wine or coffee render inappreciable the delicate markings of suns and moons, so will a vain thought, a cherished appetite, a worldly passion, an evil act, impair the sight of the soul. Again and again does God's most holy Word insist on the blinding power of sin. Because men cultivate the secular mood and indulge the carnal appetite they fail to apprehend the things that are afar off. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see.

But whilst all sins damage and darken the soul, successful sin does so in a special degree. The existence of a righteous Ruler is feelingly brought home to the transgressor promptly chastened for his sin; he thinks of God and is troubled, but he does think of Him. 'So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.' When, however, ungodliness and iniquity go unpunished, when they seize and relish the prizes of life, the transgressor is ready to mutter, 'How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?' When the wicked are apparelled in cloth of gold, decked with honours, and fare sumptuously every day, the faith of the righteous is staggered; and what imperils the faith of the saint confirms the scepticism of the ungodly. 'The vintage of the wicked' proclaims atheism in a purple rhetoric, which is also apparently unanswerable logic.

2. The sin that prospers *confuses the moral sense.* When transgression manifestly fails, bringing immediate loss and anguish, it compels men to recognize afresh the reality and energy of the moral law; but when wrongdoing enjoys immunity from censure and retribution, we are inclined to regard conscience as a mere superstition. The prophet Isaiah represents Israel as forgetting God and transgressing every item of the law of righteousness; yet the people continued to enjoy prosperity, and abandoned themselves to luxury and licence. 'The harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe, and wine' were in their feasts. What was the consequence? 'Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.' They adopted a code of morals that completely overturned the first principles of ethics, and that was utterly opposed to the law of God. Nothing produces ethical confusion like prosperity in unrighteousness. When we gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles, we begin to suspect our botany; and when we behold flowers of purple and fruits of gold springing from rotten roots of conduct, we are apt to lose faith in the fact and authority of moral law. He who suffers for sin knows evil to be evil, darkness to be darkness, bitterness to be bitterness; whilst to prosper in a false way is to call into question the fundamental and eternal truths of character and destiny. Successful sin disorders the moral faculty, persuades us that an accident is a law, produces colour-blindness of the soul; and if the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!

3. Sin, when successful at the beginning, *seduces one into greater sin.* It is really a grand thing when a youth is 'hard hit' at the beginning of a sporting life, for happily it may also be its ending; but let his first venture succeed, and henceforth he becomes the victim of an infernal spell. When one falls into intemperance and at the same time into disgrace, there may be hope of recovery; yet, escaping rebuke, the incidental excess becomes a habit. When a servant tampers with his stewardship and is forthwith brought to book, he may still be saved; but let the initial peculations remain undiscovered, and he will hardly be weaned from his dangerous trick. The delusion of evil is as when one seeks coveted things on the seashore: first a pearly bit attracts, now a painted shell surprises, next a jasper gem rewards, then, still beyond, an iridescent pebble allures, glistening in the wet sand. The enthusiast is absorbed, blind to everything but the pretty trifles which lose their lustre as soon as gathered, and he is not aware until too late that all the while the tide was rising, and now the wrathful billows cut

off his retreat. A power of mystification and glamour that appears nowhere else accompanies the thought and deed of sin.

¶ In South America a phosphorescent spider is found that attracts and dupes its prey by successive flashes of light; the moth is apparently dazed, and with the emission of each gleam creeps closer to the transfigured assassin. This is a parable of the process of sin. By successive radiations it also hypnotizes its victims to an awful doom. The broad road is a path of enchantment to the natural man even when he treads it with bleeding feet; but when the promenade is gold, broidered with roses and enlivened by applause, it is irresistible except one is arrested as Balaam was. Let none complain because, having entered on forbidden paths, his course has been suddenly cut short. 'One man can steal a horse, whilst another is punished for looking over the gate,' complains the sinner arrested at the threshold of wrongdoing. Thank God you were chastened for looking over the gate.

4. Strictly speaking, *no sin is successful;* it can be successful only superficially, apparently, temporally: all transgression implies inevitable retribution. Faults and sins go unpunished for a long while; yet at last they come to light and demand atonement. Offences against the law of the land and society may long remain hid; but from time to time, by surprising chances, they are made manifest and avenged. The negro proverb quaintly expresses a great truth: 'The devil helps the thief every day, but one day God helps the policeman.' With all the complex detective system of the modern world the lawless can scarcely expect to escape the penalty they provoke. It is said that 'only the scapegraces are lucky to the end'; but if we review the years, our observation will hardly confirm this. And when the exposure comes! Who has imagination enough to depict the humiliation and horror of it! Sailors have a saying, 'The sea pays well old debts.' The deferred storm will come; and when it does, it will make up in unwonted wrath for its delay. The social ruin of men is often the more terrible for the ominous calm that postpones it.

Yet thousands of sins escape social retribution, and it behoves us to look more deeply and widely at the matter. Suppose we escape such retribution, we cannot resist the terrible executive action of the law on the soul itself. 'Be sure your sin will find you out.' Friends may not, nor the accountants, nor the policeman, nor the magistrate, but your *sin* will: searching you, convicting you, blighting the mind, the conscience, the heart. The smothering of the last spark of nobleness is sad indeed. It must not be thought that the destructive action of sin on the higher nature is suspended because the subject of it has ceased to feel and suffer. Anæsthesia, or the momentary obliteration of the sense of painful symptoms in the body, does not imply the harmlessness of the operation, nor does chloroform annul the force of dreadful nervous shock; and cut nerves and flesh are there for life, with the horrors of them when the patient awakes: opiates, chloroforms, and chlorals may easily become destructive illusions. So by various opiates men numb conscience, and by persistence in sin become 'past feeling'; they laugh and sing and strut, they eat and drink and rise up to play: but the disintegration and demoralization of their higher self proceed all the while, subtle and profound injuries of the soul are being inflicted, maimings to be realized with horror when the gay dreamer of gay dreams awakes out of stupor to the solemn facts of the moral universe. 'What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself?'[1]

¶ Charles IX. of France in his youth was of a loving and sensitive nature. His mother's training, so inhuman, had much to do with his sad transformation. Even when she first proposed to him the massacre of the Huguenots he shrank from it in horror and said, 'No, no, madam; they are my loving subjects.' If he had listened, in this critical moment, to the voice of conscience so that its demands could never have been forgotten, St. Bartholomew's night would never have made crimson the pages of history, and he would have escaped the agony and remorse of the dark hours about his death-bed. In the terror

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Supreme Conquest*, 69ff.

of the judgment and the memory of his bloody deeds, he cried to his physician as death demanded his soul: 'Asleep or awake, I see the mangled forms of the Huguenots passing before me. They drip with blood; they make hideous faces at me; they point to their open wounds and mock me. O that I had spared at least the little infants at the breast.' Then he screamed and cried in his misery, while the bloody sweat oozed from the pores of his skin. He crushed that beautiful cluster of tender and pure impulses of the soul into the cup of remorse, and death pressed it to his lips and forced him to drain its very dregs.[1]

I do not see them here; but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see,
Each one a murdered self, with low last breath,
'I am thyself, what hast thou done to me?'
'And I—and I—thyself' (lo! each one saith),
And thou thyself to all eternity.[2]

Nothing.

Job xxvi. 7.—'He . . . hangeth the earth upon nothing.'

THERE are certain mysteries which are always with us. As every generation comes and goes, as the centuries are born and die, humanity comes to these problems with the eager expectation of youth and surrenders them with the resignation of age. We are no nearer solving them than was the author of the Book of Job. They seem to us, to-day, as they seemed to him, to require certain majestic inferences of faith. We conceive that we live and move and have our being in mystery for the culture and discipline of a filial attitude of soul, and reverent humility of mind. But we take refuge still in the great phrases wherein the children of thought and faith clothed the nakedness of their ignorance 3000 years ago. Some of these phrases express at once the depth of ignorance and the height of wisdom. They are a confession that the author knows nothing, and yet knows everything. Our text is such a phrase. 'He hangeth the earth upon nothing.' That is not a confession of mere intellectual agnosticism; it is a confession of faith, the harvest of spiritual perception. Behind the something that we see that is ours, is the nothing that is God's. And what we call nothing is the home of Omnipotence, the habitation of eternal wisdom and eternal love. Reality *begins*, not ends, where our human vision ceases. The most amazing thing in the universe is not the visible order, but the nothing of empty space, pulsating, if we were able to conceive it, with the life of God. The unthinkable, inconceivable thing is not something but nothing. Gradually it dawned upon the seers of our race that behind man's somethings lay God's nothing. Behind the visible, everywhere, lay the invisible. That which is sensitive and responsive to no chemical test: dark, silent, dread vacuity—the awful cloak that covers impenetrably the origins of things—this is the supreme mystery—nothing. 'What is seen,' says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. 'hath not been made out of things which do appear.' What is seen hangs on that which does *not* appear. 'He hangeth the earth upon nothing.' He who uses, as Paul says, the things which are not to bring to *nought* things which are, uses also things which are not to bring to *perfection* things which are. The somethings of the universe are temporal; their laws are laws of change and decay. They pass from fashion to fashion; one form of existence merging into another. The eternal, the unchangeable, the durable, the persistent is what we in our ignorance of the ultimate substance describe as nothing—God's nothing, which is everything. 'He hangeth the earth upon nothing.'

1. It was one of the earliest curiosities of our human intellect to see the pillars of the universe. Arguing from the laws of rude architecture to the necessary laws of God's architecture, men said that the vault of Heaven must be sustained by vast pillars. The whole weight of the stars, which were conceived as fixed in the roof of the universe, must be borne by some tremendous buttresses,

[1] C. Myers, *Making a Life*, 286.
[2] D. G. Rossetti.

else the firmament would fall in. So men believed, and though the fashion of their belief was false, yet the belief itself stands good. We have other phrases, that sound to us more explicit and exact, with which we cover more handsomely the nakedness of our ignorance. We have discovered that the earth turns in towards the sun with the exact velocity required by the law of gravitation. We have discovered that the system of the world is sustained and governed by this same law. What holds the stars in their places, and orders their movements, and determines the place of every particle of matter in this immeasurable universe is—gravitation. And gravitation is what? Nothing. It submits to no analysis. Is it a property of matter? Who knows? It is a law, it is a force, it is a quality: it is anything, it is everything, it is nothing. No one has ever seen it, though everyone is dependent on it and governed by it. Without it we could not exist, yet what it is, and why it is, and where it is, and how it is, we have no conception. It is the secret of all stability; itself, an intangible, elusive mystery. Nothing is so visible in its effects, or so inscrutable in its being. It is everywhere, it is nowhere; it is everything, it is nothing. It *is* the pillars of the universe. But for it the whole sublime edifice would tumble into ruins. But as verily as when the author of these words first spoke them, the saying remains true, 'He hangeth the earth upon nothing.'

2. Take another application of the same truth. Behind us lies the mighty past, the sum of all that has ever been, the dateless numberless ages, unrecorded by any eye and mind save One. All that has gone to make history—that which, if it were set out in full, the world itself could not contain the books that must be written—all that is contained in what we call the past. And beyond this continent of boundless achievement lies that undiscovered country of boundless possibility which we call the future. The past, says Carlyle, is everything being nothing; the future is nothing being everything. All the predestined æons that are yet to be, through which suns and stars are to move in their courses, all the ambitions that are to be realized, all the projects that are to be accomplished—all these belong to the future. So there we have them, two boundless continents—the past, the future; and between them, linking them—what? The frailest, slightest, most precarious bridge ever engineered. This fleeting moment of time! That is all. The actual present moment is all there is. What has been, has been; and what shall be, shall be. But now is the only accepted time.

This moment is thine, the Lord hath said it;
The next is nothing till He hath made it.

This moment—everything, and nothing. A bubble on a flying stream. Something we cannot grasp, it comes and goes with such incredible rapidity. And yet it is all that is given us to do our work in, and to think our thoughts, and to prepare our soul. He hangeth everything upon nothing. What the centuries that are coming upon us are to be—all progress, all achievement—depends upon our use of this flashing, fleeting point of time. It is the greatest of all gifts—yet is it no gift at all. For it is given and taken away in an instant. Loaned to us, and the loan recalled; advanced as capital and withdrawn. Time enough only for acts and thoughts of decision. The will is quick enough to decide in it; the mind to think; the soul to hope and believe. The monitions of conscience gleam in it like flashlights at sea; and in it that urgent thing duty can be known, embraced and done. And this *nothing*—this indefinite, immaterial, incomprehensible 'moment' is thus ours. Everything—life, history, duty, all our world—'He hangeth upon nothing.'

The key of all the future, whether ominous or bright,
Is in the present hour—in constant reverence for the right;
'What saith the Lord unto His servants?' thence doth duty spring,
Thence safety, peace, and triumph rise, whate'er the years may bring.[1]

3. Now let us venture on more distinctively Christian ground, and say He hangeth salva-

[1] T. Crawford, *Horae Serenae*, 33.

tion itself upon nothing—upon what admits of no tangible demonstration, no scientific analysis—upon nothing substantial, nothing material. There is all the difference here between what is called salvation by works and salvation by faith. Salvation by works has something to show for itself. Salvation by faith stakes everything—life and heaven and immortality—on what may be called a psychical decision, or volition, a spirit, an attitude. When Tetzel sold the peasants of Mainz, or Augsburg, heaven and its privileges for so much money down, the vendor gave a parchment title or certificate, as to a freehold property. The purchasers said, 'Here is something tangible, visible.' He hangeth heaven and salvation upon something. Behind the parchment was the Vatican, and the authoritative decree of the Head of the Church. The Church's credit was pledged to the simplest peasant that his or her salvation was secure. There was something substantial to hang salvation upon.

But over against this system we stand saying, God hangeth salvation upon nothing. He asks only a spiritual volition, an attitude of the will in faith and obedience to Christ Jesus, Saviour and Lord. That is God's everything, that is all He asks. It is upon that attitude of soul that the whole world of character and holy Christian activity hangs. Tested by all material standards it is nothing; weighed in the balances of heaven it is everything. He that believeth hath everlasting life. Then, if I hold up the Apostles' Creed, may I not hang my salvation on that? No. Not on that, nor on any articles of belief. But on the belief that is a God-ward, truth-ward attitude of soul, a manhood set toward righteousness and the King of righteousness—on that hangs, as we believe and hesitate not to affirm and proclaim, the salvation of the soul.[1]

¶ Listen to William Booth. In a letter to his wife he writes: 'The great plan of Salvation is, ceasing from making efforts to make unto yourself a righteous character, and sinking helpless into the arms of Christ and accepting Full Salvation, a pure heart, and all the blessings of the New Covenant by faith. I see that I have erred here. I have promised and promised, and bowed and bowed, and always failed; whereas now I go to Him and say, I am nothing, Thou art my all in all. Try this. Will you, darling—Don't begin at the outside and aim at patching up this rent and that rent in your life, but go to Jesus and take the blessings of a pure heart at His hand, and say,

" 'Tis done, Thou dost this moment save,
With full salvation bless,
Redemption through Thy Blood I have
And spotless love and peace." '[1]

[1] C. Silvester Horne.

The Foundations of Society.

Job xxvi. 7.—'He hangeth the earth upon nothing.'

If this is true in respect of the tangible universe, is it not true in respect of all civilization? Is not the last factor in civilization spiritual? 'He hangeth the earth upon nothing'—does not He hang society upon the same attenuation? Society, says the superficialist, rests upon usages; it rests upon legal compacts; it rests upon institutions; it rests upon commercial reciprocities. No, we say, we must go further than that; spiritual men have got a place in the world yet. If the spiritual element is the fundamental element of the physical universe, spiritual laws and dynamics explain society. All civilization at last is determined not by utilities and policies and costs, but by delicate threads, by supernaturalisms, transcending facts and forces.

What are these forces that lie behind politics and utilities and commerce, as imponderable forces lie at the back of Nature? What are they? Love, Righteousness, Hope. On this trinity all civilization hangs.

1. Society rests upon *love*. There is an ethereality! There is transcendental quantity! As the world gets older and as men think more deeply, they are becoming conscious that there is no force in society like the

[1] *Life of William Booth*, i. 159.

force of love. And what are they all talking about to-day? What are their great words? Fatherhood, motherhood, brotherhood, sympathy, mutuality, sacrifice! Our great sociologists are coming to perceive that love is the dominating force in society, as gravitation is the dominating force in physics. All society finds its origin in, and is held together by, love; the prime dynamic of society is love and sacrifice. The Bible has a great deal to say about love, and the world is finding out that the Bible made no mistake. The ethereality we call love is the most powerful factor of civilization.

¶ One day the Maréchale received an invitation to dine with a dozen anarchists. Her comrades told her she would be blown up with bombs, but she went, and enjoyed herself, for extremes meet.

'So you are come to talk to us,' said Elisée Reclus with a smile, 'of justification by faith and sanctification by faith.'

'Oh, no, no! I do not talk of doctrines. They never troubled me in my life. I care only for realities. You have suffered; I too have suffered. Let us begin there, and compare notes. Some of you have been in prison; I have been in prison. You have been exiled; so have I. You have wept over the injustice and cruelties of the world; so have I wept, so do I weep.

And thus they found common ground, agreeing in their diagnosis of the diseases of society, differing only as to the remedy. 'You believe in anarchy,' said the Maréchale. 'One of your number said at one of my meetings that anarchy is the most beautiful religion in the world. I know a more excellent way—a shorter cut to making the world better. You fling your bombs to destroy life; how can people be converted when their heads are gone? Christ said, "Follow me to Calvary!" He shed His *own* blood. He bids us save the world by denying ourselves and taking up the Cross.' [1]

2. Society rests on *righteousness*. A nation may have freedom and a nation may have power, but without righteousness civilization, as we have seen again and again, dissolves. What is righteousness? Is it utility? We know better. We know that righteousness is only another word for godliness. The prime guarantee for morality to-day is not social influence, not commercial advantages. Morality finds its last guarantee in the living and righteous God. Civilization depends upon righteousness, a transcending quality, a ghostly element.

¶ Disraeli did not believe any more than Carlyle that the greatness of a nation depended on the abundance of its possessions. He did not believe in a progress which meant the abolition of the traditionary habits of the people, the destruction of village industries, and the accumulation of the population into enormous cities, where their character and their physical qualities would be changed and would probably degenerate. The only progress which he could acknowledge was moral progress, and he considered that all legislation which proposed any other object to itself would produce, in the end, the effects which the prophets of his own race had uniformly and truly foretold.[1]

3. What is the third force? *Hope!* Without hope civilization rots. What is hope? Idealism. This world advances by ideals, dreams, visions. Etherealities again! These seem of little consequence to practical men, who look upon them with a kind of tranquil restraint because they know the ropes. The ropes! There are no ropes! There are ghostly things, etherealities, vanishing factors called truth, justice, righteousness, words that belong to the transcendent universe and which have no validity except as we bring the spiritual universe into view.

Love, Righteousness, Hope—in these great words society inheres and finds its dynamics, and the men outside who know the ropes are not in it because this is the only basis on which God has planned our civilization.

The electrons and the ethers and the ponderabilities are not the last secrets of God. Do not let us be ashamed of ourselves because we stand for invisibilities. 'He hangeth the earth

[1] J. Struhan, *The Maréchale*, 256.

[1] J. A. Froude, *The Earl of Beaconsfield*, 93.

upon nothing,' but Job's 'nothing' meant the elemental force that shapes civilization unto great and splendid issues. He hangeth the earth upon holiness; He hangeth civilization upon the same thread; and as we stand by His side we are His angels, we are His legions, we are His ministers; and we know the significance of society because we stand close to the invisible and silent Power that moves reason and conscience and the hearts of men.

¶ 'I know I was a damned fool,' says Septimus in Locke's novel. 'So are you. So are the apostles, the missionaries, the explorers, all who dream great dreams. All damned fools, but a glorious company all the same. I'm not ashamed to belong to it.'[1]

Saint or Sinner.

Job xxvii. 6.—'My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go.'

1 John i. 8.—'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'

THERE was a time when Job's saying, 'My righteousness I hold fast,' may have given trouble to theologians. On the face of the words it is contradictory to the saying of St. John with which it is here quoted, and subversive of all theologies which assert the Fall and universal sinfulness. On the face of the words. For the commentators no doubt are right who explain that Job is not taking up a theological position, but only denying specific charges of misconduct. Still, if Job was not challenging any existing doctrine of Sin, his words do with some pointedness name a theological theory which others than Job actually do hold and avow, and avow in deliberate challenge of the doctrine of man's sinfulness, a theory which has most authority in the Church, and which is, with no less pointedness, named by the sentence from St. John, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.'

Let us consider this discordance between religious thinkers for which we have made the word of Job and the word of John respectively the motto. Quite recently we have heard it said that the average good man of our time 'is not worrying about his sins,' and we have also heard the emphatic reply that, if he is not worrying about his sins, he ought to be; for his sinfulness is a fact, and one of vital import for his soul's fate.

It is indeed a controversy which is permanent, or at least shows no sign of being resolved. On the one side has always stood the disciple of John. He declares the reality of sin and the necessity of redemption from it. Behind him is an unwavering tradition, championed by those minds in every period which have held the faith with the most passion of spirit and the sternest outline of logical definition. On the other side has stood some continuer of the tradition which descends from Job. He declares a conscience void of any deadly guilt, and is unable to echo the confession of his severe brother in belief, that he is a miserable sinner, and that his heart is desperately wicked and is cut off from God. Behind him stands a counter-tradition—an irrepressible instinct, a sense, which will not be silenced, of rectitude; a disbelief in the perils of damnation, disbelief as of a child before his father, who, having done no harm, fears none either; a conscience, indeed, which knows something of a love of God shed abroad in the heart, but next to nothing of a remorse which, it is said, should haunt it.

There they stand, the two: the man who has the sense of sin, the man who has it not. They have stood thus matched against one another ever since there was religion in the world; and neither has been able to overthrow the other. Now one has been the stronger in argument, now the other. In our own immediate day there has come to the defender of man's natural goodness in this wrestle of the doctrines an increment of strength from the recent movement of human mind. The consciousness that in his modern scientific method he holds a new organ of research into fact has inspired in man a new self-confidence and a prouder belief in his great place in the universe, making more for self-assertion than for self-abasement. The thinker has gone forth beyond the ramparts of the world to range the illimitable with mind and spirit.

[1] Quoted by A. H. Small in *The Kingdom and the King*, 84.

What wonder, then, if 'the terrors of the mind scatter' as a cloud; what wonder if, with the fire of new achievement in his veins, man, for an hour, and until experience comes full circle and brings his littleness back to him, dreams himself not only more wise than he had been taught to think, but more good; and finds it less natural to walk humbly with his God and let his own righteousness go?

But there they stand matched, the strength inclining now to one, now to the other, but neither able to throw the other down in the controversy. Which of them, we ask, has the right of it?

Many of us will be disposed to say, seeing the difference is so ancient and has proved so irreconcilable, that it is likely neither has the right and both. We shall infer that here is one of those antinomies, as that of Free Will and Necessity, which are truths diversely portioned out in two factors to diverse minds according as they are able to bear better the one or the other. Man is a miserable sinner, *and* he has a righteousness which he may hold fast and not let go. He who can find room in his mind for both truths has the truth.

Yet even if each doctrine is right until it denies the other, they may not be equally right. The two factors may be alike indispensable, and yet not of equal weight and like proportion to the whole. There is still, then, to be determined which is the predominant, which is the hinge on which hangs the heavier charge and burden of man's spiritual fate. Can one doubt which? We do not appeal to the weight of the authority of the saints, though that seems to be overwhelmingly thrown into the scale of the doctrine of man's sinfulness. Nor to the fruits by which we are to know our teachers, though on this evidence, too, the same doctrine must conquer. We appeal to the inherent greater reasonableness of the doctrine which emphasizes the fact of sin . Man, his nature and his fate in the universe,is a subtle,not a simple,problem, and the solution must needs be a subtle one: he is a deep riddle, and the answer must be deep: he is a mystery, and the interpretation of him must be mystical. Of two views of man, a simpler and a more mysterious, the one which is plain and obvious, which lies on the surface and strikes the eye, which offers itself to common sense, is the one we must more distrust. The mysteriousness and profundity of the doctrine of sin, its unlikelihood when gazed at by common-sense in broad daylight, its incredibleness to a practical mind, is a character which attracts conviction. If I am to choose between holding fast my righteousness and confessing myself a miserable sinner, it is the latter I must choose as the more in harmony with my outlook on the world.

¶ At our day, conviction of sin is woefully uncommon. 'What must I do to be saved?' is a question heard now, by man and by God, far, far more rarely than, let us say, sixty, or fifty, or forty years ago. Yet it is a question which concerns the very life of true religion. For 'the glorious Gospel of the blessed God' is calculated for convinced sinners, not for self-complacent virtuous men. The doctrine of the Cross is still 'folly,' except to the broken, contrite heart. Let such hearts cease to be, and the Gospel will sound in vain; or rather it will be silent as air-waves are silent when there are no ears to know the waves as sound.[1]

¶ At Lord Ardmillan's table in the 'seventies, Whyte once found himself near Professor John Stuart Blackie, that figure of erratic and irresponsible genius yet of abounding vitality and charm, who taught little Greek syntax to the students of his days, but brought a welcome ray of the brighter side of Hellenism into the grey streets of Edinburgh. The talk turned on epitaphs, and Blackie, turning to Whyte, said, with a swift flash of insight that brought the character of both men into bold relief: 'If you have the writing of my epitaph, I know what it will be. It will be this—'Here lies a man who had every virtue but a sense of sin.' Long after, Dr. Whyte was with his eldest daughter and one of his nephews, and the talk turned to a young friend, of whose considerateness and unselfishness Dr. Whyte spoke with the very warmest appreciation. He ended his eulogy by saying, 'I should apply to him, as fully as to any one I know, the phrase *anima naturaliter Christiana*. But,' he added, after a pause, with an

[1] H. C. G. Moule.

unusual measured emphasis, 'I have observed that such characters seldom gain an experience of the deepest evangelical religion.'[1]

The Hidden Path.

Job xxviii. 7.—'That path no bird of prey knoweth; neither hath the falcon's eye seen it' (RV).

THERE is very little that a bird of prey cannot see. An eagle poised in mid-heaven can, with his amazing power of vision, trace the movement of every living thing on a road so far below that it looks but like a white thread winding in and out and up and down on hill and plain. It can discover tracks in the wilds which no human foot has ever trodden, far remote from the busy ways of men. This is a power with which not even the most highly developed human organs can compete; it is a marvellous gift, almost terrifying in its precision and the swiftness of movement to which it is allied. What can escape it? There is no mountain road so lofty, so inaccessible, no ravine so deep and dark, but it all lies bare and open to the gaze of the mighty feathered creatures who hunt their quarry upon it, watching from an incredible height in the sky above, and swooping suddenly, relentlessly, and with unerring aim upon their victims cowering unsheltered on the ground. But there is a path of safety and peace, of joy and light, which even this faculty of vision knows not of and is unable to discover, and that is the path that leads to the knowledge of God, which is eternal life.

This is not merely the statement that there is a wisdom, a knowledge, an insight, an ever-ascending experience for the discovery of which all natural endowments are insufficient; it is something more. There is the suggestion that that hidden pathway, if we can only find it, is one on which the soul is immune from harm; nothing evil can touch it, no destruction can reach it, all the forces of hell put together, all the diabolic cleverness and ingenuity that can be enlisted on the side of wickedness are helpless to invade its security or even to find out where it is. They are utterly baffled; they know nothing about it; nothing that they can do bears any relation to the sphere through which it lies. 'There is a path which no bird of prey knoweth, and which the falcon's eye hath not seen.' One cannot imagine a better figure of speech wherewith to describe what every spiritually minded man and woman knows concerning the life which is hid with Christ in God.

There is a way of escape, a retreat for the soul where no winged monster of destruction can follow. 'And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.' 'I am the way,' said Jesus, 'and the truth, and the life.' The comfort of God is very real and very strong; the peace of God is a precious and most potent possession. You may lose everything in this world, be stripped of every earthly gain, and yet walk in perfect calm and quiet on the heavenly road, immune to the attack of every foe. 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' This is so true, so sweetly helpful, in the time of trouble.

¶ There is a beautiful Irish legend concerning, I think, St. Patrick, and really adapted from a still older Gaelic myth concerning the relations of the hero-deity Angus Og with one of his warriors. But I love the Christian version of it, for it is so plainly a parable of the spiritual life. It is said that while the Saint was a slave and kept swine on the hill of Slemish in Antrim, he was assailed by marauders who sought his life and put him in great fear. While the fear lasted he suffered much and trembled greatly, knowing not whither to flee from the cunning and violence of his foes against whom he had no defence. But he cried earnestly upon Christ, who appeared to him saying,' There is no peril save thy fears.' And forthwith there opened before him a flower-strewn pathway leading straight through the ranks of those who came to slay him. They saw him not; they touched him not; yet presently returned whence they

[1] *The Life of Alexander Whyte, D.D.*, 373.

came, boasting that they had killed Patrick. While he held his Master's hand he walked invisible on the shining road that passed over the mountain tops and was lost amid the stars. The breezes were full of melody; there was a strange unearthly fragrance in the air; every blossom upon the boughs became a silver chime of fairy bells; and every blade of grass under foot, and every leaf upon the trees became a tongue that whispered peace. And the Saint laughed softly at the recollection that he had ever been afraid—afraid of what? He now knew himself invulnerable—not in body but in soul. He realized that earth could destroy nothing that was of heaven, and that the only invincible power in the wide universe was the love of God. I have taken liberties with the legend, but it comes near enough to the facts of every day experience to tell us what we most need to learn. There is a mystic pathway which we can tread at any moment hand in hand with Christ our Saviour and our Lord. No evil can reach us there, no adversary can harm; carnal wisdom cannot discover it at all. It is not a fortress, not a place of refuge from which we must presently come forth again; it is a road that leads straight home to all the good that ever has been or ever will be, to the treasure house of God, to the glorious kingdom of love.[1]

O path which no eagle knoweth,
No vulture's eye hath seen,
Where never the lion goeth,
Nor the fierce lion's track hath been;

Not in the land of the living
That wondrous path is known,
But Death and Destruction know it,
Path trodden by One alone.

Path of the lonely sorrow,
Path of the Lamb who died,
Path from the grave to the glory—
No other path beside.

From the depths of the doom and darkness
Ascends that wondrous road,
Which leads the heart of the sinner
Up to the heart of God.

[1] R. J. Campbell.

For from heights of the golden city
He made the glorious road,
Which leads to the heart of the sinner
Down from the heart of God.[1]

The Eye of God.

Job xxviii. 10.—'His eye seeth every precious thing.'

THESE words refer to the miner who digs for the treasure hidden in the earth. He finds the vein of silver and the place of the gold. He breaks into the dark chambers of the earth and searches out its perfection; he digs down to the place of sapphires and the dust of gold. There is a path far down in the gloom of the mine 'which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen; the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.' There the miner rends the rocks and overturns the mountains by the roots. 'There he cutteth rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing.' That is doubtless the meaning of the words, and thus they might afford a text for a sermon full of teaching for us—the work of the miner seeking for the hid treasures. But we may venture rather to give the words another significance. If *man's* eye sees the precious things, let us think how God sees them. Of Him who set the gold in the rocks and gave the silver its bed, and stored up the coal and the iron for the use of man—of Him it may be said, with a richer meaning and a far greater truth, His eye seeth every precious thing.

What are some of the precious things that God sees?

1. God sees *the saint in the sinner*. There are those who appear to be inseparably wedded to their evil thoughts and ways. All that is gracious, all that has affinities with Christ and heaven, all hunger and thirst after righteousness—these things, in them, are buried beneath layer after layer of soil and rock. They are inveterately careless. They run greedily after sin. They refuse to listen to the voice of con-

[1] MS of the earlier part of the fourteenth century, tr. Frances Bevan.

science, and the call of the Bible, and the pleading of the Holy Ghost. The sapphires and the gold are hidden in impenetrable depths, depths so impenetrable that nine people out of ten do not suspect their existence. Here and there someone is found with a little of Christ's compassion and discernment and zeal, and he says, 'The transgressor is not so sunken but that the grace of God may reach and quicken him yet; and therefore I will pray for him, and I will speak to him, and I will coax and persuade him to what is good by every method which I can devise.' But these discriminating and loving souls are in the minority. Most men have no conception of the pricelessness of lost and wayward souls. They do not dream that they are walking across diamond fields, and that they should be excavating and burnishing the diamonds. But God is not so blind. He detects the saint in the sinner. He detects the servant in the rebel. He detects His own dear child in the self-banished outcast who has gone wilfully into the far country.

¶In the midsummer of 1648, a Royalist soldier was captured by the men of the Parliament, after a fierce fight in the streets of Maidstone, and was condemned to die on the gallows. By a kind of miracle he succeeded in making his escape. But he 'abode still,' the old biography says, 'as vile and debauched in his life as before, being a great drinker and gamester and swearer.' Yet by and by John Gifford—for that was the soldier's name—having had first himself and then his Saviour revealed to him, became a preacher of the Gospel in the town of Bedford. He it is who lives in the literature of the world as the Evangelist of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He it was who pointed Bunyan himself, when he wept and broke into a lamentable cry, to the Interpreter's house and the place where the Cross of Jesus stands.

About the year 1730 a lad of sixteen was serving in the Bell Inn at Gloucester. He did not like his occupation, but he confesses that more than once he was overcome by its temptations and fell before the allurement of strong drink. But God, he says, forced him out of the business, and took him 'from drawing wine for drunkards to draw water from the wells of salvation for the refreshment of His spiritual Israel.' Who was that lad? He was George Whitefield, who changed the roughs of Moorfields and the colliers of Kingswood into children in the family of the Father, who evangelized North America from Massachusetts to Georgia, who roused the sleeping Church of Scotland from her lethargy.[1]

2. God sees *the motive behind the service.* Often the service is commonplace, but the motive is high and fine. A master in theology has written, 'The praise is not in the deed done, but in the manner of its doing.' It is the motive behind the action that counts. And probably there is less risk of our motives being marred by pride, and cankered by the sense of self-importance, when we are denied the opportunity of accomplishing great things and can be faithful only in that which is least. It may be that God discovers more of what is costly and beautiful in the patience and lealheartedness and unnoticed courage of the privates in His army than in the far-flashing qualities of those in higher command.

Life's truest harvest is in what we *would*,
And strive our best for,
Not most in what we *could*.
The things we count supreme
Stand, haply, not so high
In God's esteem
As *How* and *Why*.

All-seeing Sight
Cleaves through the husk of things,
Right to the Roots and Springs,—
Sees all things whole,
And measures less the body than the soul.
All-Righteous Right
Will weigh men's motives,
Not their deeds alone.
End and Beginning unto Him are one;
And *would* for *could* shall oft, perchance, atone.

Motives are seeds,
From which at times spring deeds
Not equal to the soul's outreaching hope.
Strive for the Stars!

[1] A. Smellie.

Count nought well done but best!
Then, with brave patience, leave the rest
To Him who knows.
He'll judge you justly ere the record close.[1]

3. God sees *the whole in the part*. We have our ideals, our aspirations. We set out with brave and buoyant souls, and nothing seems impossible. We mean to be propagandists of the truth we have received, and distributors of the largesse which has made our own hearts glad. And these aims of ours are partially realized; these long long thoughts have a measure of fulfilment. But we do not get time to finish anything here. When life is stretched to its utmost limit, the labourer leaves his task incomplete; and how often that helper of Christ and men whom we pronounce most indispensable has but entered on his enterprise when death sweeps down and stops his activities peremptorily and remorselessly!

But His eye seeth every precious thing; and nothing more precious than the disappointed ideals, the aspirations snapped and left behind. Why are they so dear?

(1) Because the work, although it was only begun, has been ripening the worker. It is good to have standards which we do not reach on this side of heaven; good to cherish purposes so lofty that on earth they remain unrealized; good to spend ourselves in the vineyard, even if our working-day has but nine hours in it, or six, or four, instead of the full tale of twelve. It is thus that we drink of the fountain of health, and are drawn nearer to the character and the glory of our Lord.

(2) There is a second reason. The unfinished task will appeal to somebody else. If David is not allowed to build the Temple, although the Temple has been in his soul for years, Solomon will charge himself with the execution of his father's desire. It has been well said that 'no hope of a believing heart is merely a hope: it is an unborn event; it is sacred history in the stage of its making.' Another carries home with singing the yellow sheaves from the field which we sowed with weeping; and the day will come when he that reaps and he that sows shall rejoice together.

[1] John Oxenham, *Bees in Amber*, 30.

(3) Then, too, there is the Divine Book of Remembrance. Those unperfected toils are not forgotten by the King of kings. They influence Him. They perform their essential function in His government. Science tells of the conservation of energy: how, in the natural realm, no power is lost, however frequently its form may be altered. In the spiritual realm there is a similar conservation of energy. Whatever we begin in the strength of the Holy Ghost must work out its mission and must attain its end. Our poet is right. The passion that 'left the ground to lose itself in the sky' is 'music sent up to God.' 'Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by-and-by.'

¶ There is a beautiful legend of Fra Bernardo. The monastery had vowed to set up a carved altar to the Christ at Christmastide. Every monk was to do his own part. All the other monks had finished their work. On Christmas Eve, Fra Bernardo knelt and told his Lord of his failure. He had tried with his poor skill to carve something for the altar, for Christ's dear sake, but somehow he could not make anything worthy. So he prayed that his fingers might have skill, and that he might be able that very night to carve the dream of beauty that was in his heart. In the morning the monks sought Bernardo's cell and found him there

'Dead, smiling still, and prostrate as in prayer;
While at his side a wondrous carving lay—
A face of Christ sublimely tender, sweet,—
The work of Fra Bernardo was complete.'

So it will be with those who seem to fail, but who continue striving faithfully, doing their lowly work as well as they can. When the end comes it will be seen that what to them seemed failure was beautiful with the beauty of Christ. God finishes the work that his lowly ones try to do for Him.[1]

4. God sees *the ending after the pilgrimage*. To us who are not experts the mine where the priceless metals lie is a disagreeable place. But the trained workman reads in rock and quartz the promise of future

[1] J. R. Miller, *The Glory of the Commonplace*, 154.

treasure. He knows what the results will be from the labour under-ground, and the washing above, and the chemist's processes, and all the discipline to which stones and ores will be subjected.

Is not our sanctification—our own, and that of those who are twined about our hearts—often a perplexity and trial? It is not a smooth path by which we are led to the Celestial City. There are fightings and fears. There are turbulent temptations. There are sore bereavements. There are waters 'to the palate bitter and to the stomach cold.' There are furnace-fires which burn and scorch.

He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart;
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part.

Yea more, with His own hand He seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe;
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds and laid me low.

It is puzzling, is it not? It is far from the experience which we would have chosen. No doubt we shall be able to interpret it in due time: we shall rest and stand in our own lot at the end of the days. But meanwhile it baffles our comprehension and, not seldom, fills us with pain. Yet it will be our wisdom to leave ourselves in God's strong and tender hands. He brings clean things from unclean. He discovers His sapphires and pearls in the depths of the earth and the caves of the sea. He will transform us into townsfolk of His New Jerusalem, who shall not be out of harmony with the shining city where we dwell. It will need much education, much patience both on His side and on ours, not a little chastisement—the pitman's axe, the chemist's acid, the jeweller's sharp and delicate tools. But He knows best; He knows best. He sees every precious thing; and He employs just those agencies by which its preciousness is most effectively brought out to view.

The soul that drifts all darkly dim
Through floods that seem outside of grace,
Is only surging towards the place
Which Thou hast made and meant for him.[1]

[1] Alice Cary.

Wisdom.

Job xxviii. 12.—'Where shall wisdom be found?'

The idea of the Wisdom or Kochmah, as all careful readers of the Bible will be aware, fills a great place in the Old Testament. It is, indeed, the subject of a distinct literature within the compass of the sacred Canon. In their different ways, the Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and the Book of Job are devoted to treating of it.

1. Wisdom is that eager desire for knowledge which rests unsatisfied so long as a corner of darkness is left unexplored—that passion for learning which dived, as in the Book of Job, into the mysteries of the creation, 'making the weight for the winds, a decree for the rain, a way for the lightning of the thunder'; entering into the treasures of the snow, and seeing the treasure-houses of the hail, examining out of whose womb came the ice, and who gendered the hoary frost of heaven. A spirit of inquiry may, no doubt, become frivolous and useless. But that is not its heaven-born mission, and it was no profane or worldly critic, but the holy author of *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, who commended, by precept as by example, the religious duty of learning all that can be possibly learnt of God, of man, or of Nature. Listen to some of these stimulating injunctions: 'He that can see God in all things, and hath all things sanctified by the love of God, should above all things value each particle of knowledge of which such holy use may be made, as we value every grain of gold.' 'Every degree of knowledge tendeth to more; and every known truth befriendeth others; and like fire tendeth to the spreading of our knowledge to all neighbour truths, that are intelligible.' 'Look well to all things, or to as many as possible. When half is unknown, the other half is not half known.' Such is the value, the eternal value, of learning.

¶ The greatest gift with which Nature endowed him, that was practically the parent of all others, was not a mere desire for knowledge, a thirst for truth, but a perfect passion for learning, for knowledge. . . .

After his delivery of the great Cooper Institute speech in New York, February 27th, 1860, he made a short trip through New England, in which he aroused great public interest, both as to the man and his message. A leading paper contained the following interview with him:

'Well, as to education, the newspapers are correct. I never went to school more than six months in my life. I can say this: that among my earliest recollections I remember how, when a mere child, I used to get irritated when anybody talked to me in a way that I could not understand. I can remember going to my little bedroom, after hearing the neighbors talk of an evening with my father, and spending no small part of the night trying to make out what was the exact meaning of some of their, to me, dark sayings.

I could not sleep, although I tried to, when I got on such a hunt for an idea until I had caught it; and when I thought I had got it I was not satisfied until I had repeated it over and over again, until I had put it in language plain enough, as I thought, for any boy I knew to comprehend. This was a kind of passion with me, and it has stuck by me; for I am never easy now, when I am handling a thought, until I have bounded it north and bounded it south and bounded it east and bounded it west.'[1]

2. But there is another kind of wisdom, which, although it may be united with learning, is also often found quite apart from it, and which furnishes some of the elements which go to make up the Biblical, the religious, idea of wisdom. The exercise of practical judgment and discretion; a wise and understanding heart to discern between good and bad; largeness of heart, to take in the varying affairs of men; the capacity for justice, judgment, and equity;—this also, if the Bible, if human experience, is true, is a heavenly gift of the first magnitude. No doubt, wisdom is not of itself goodness. The Proverbs are not the Psalms, Solomon was not David. But wisdom is next door to goodness, and religion leans upon her. How many benevolent schemes have been endangered, how many missions foiled, how many bitter controversies engendered and perpetuated, how many wild superstitions encouraged, simply because wisdom has not been allowed to have her perfect work; because men have refused to acknowledge that common-sense is a Christian grace; because the children of this world have been in their generation wiser than the children of light; because men have failed to bear in mind that for many evils the real remedy is to be found, not in ancient precedent, or popular agitation, or resplendent principles, but in a few homely maxims such as those of the Book of Proverbs—a few grains of discretion, sense, and foresight. What a new aspect would be put upon idleness, selfishness, extravagance, if we could be taught to think not only of their sinfulness, but of their contemptible folly, if we could be induced to confess not only that we are miserable sinners, but also how often we have been miserable fools. What a great security for human welfare if we were to set ourselves not only to become better, but wiser, not only to gain holiness and virtue, but, as Solomon says, to 'get wisdom, get understanding'; to pray that He who giveth liberally and upbraideth not would, in addition to His other blessings, 'give us wisdom.'

¶ Let us recall the advice which old John Brown of Haddington (at the time Professor of Theology to the Associate Burgher Synod) is recorded to have given to a young theologian, ambitious of becoming a sound expositor of the Word: 'There are three things necessary for being a sound expositor of the Word: the first, a competent knowledge of the original tongues,—that's a matter of mere plodding, any man who is not incurably lazy may get that; second, personal piety,—that any man may get too, if he will only ask for it; third, common-sense,—and if you dinna bring that wi' you, I canna tell whar ye can get it!'[1]

3. But there is still another wisdom granted us. Job's question is answered in Christ. All mysteries, all puzzles, all contradictions, are

[1] R. M. Wanamaker, *The Voice of Lincoln*, 12.

[1] John Stuart Blackie, *Notes of a Life*, 268.

solved and set at rest in Him. In Him who is Himself the mystery of God are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden.

Mere learning will not make me wise. The path to wisdom is not necessarily through the schools. The brilliant scholar may be an arrant fool. Nor is common-sense the highest wisdom. True wisdom is found, not in mental acquisitions, but in a certain spiritual relation. The wise man is known by the pose of his soul. He is 'inclined toward the Lord.' He has returned to his rest, and he finds light and vision in the fellowship of his Lord.

A candle in the night
But little space makes bright;
And when the skylark sings
He soars on fading wings.

Thus wisdom may not see
The things that distant be;
Nor may its eager ear
The world's far secrets hear.

But God exists; what more
Lies hid in learned lore?
My duty well I know;
Has life aught else to show?

God's works and ways I see,
God's wisdom teaches me;
I seek no other guide,
If He be by my side.[1]

Experience.

Job xxviii. 20.—'Whence then cometh wisdom, and where is the place of understanding?'

THE famous chapter on Wisdom in the Book of Job is familiar to everyone, both as it stands in our English Bibles and as interpreted by great musicians. But the lesson which the inspired poet intends to convey is sometimes misunderstood. What is that hidden treasure which is not to be found either in the depth or in the height above? that supreme possession which cannot be gotten for the gold of Ophir, for the precious onyx or the sapphire? that deepest mystery which is hid from the eyes of all living, and of which God alone understandeth the way, and knoweth the place? By 'Wisdom' is meant the key to the secret of the universe, the whole plan of creation; all that God saw and prepared 'when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder.' This is the knowledge which man seeks, but can never find. For him there is an appointed substitute—'The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.'

1. There are three realms in which we may search for wisdom.

(1) There is the realm of *Nature*. All round about us are the everlasting hills and those silent stars that stud the heavens. All around us are the strange phenomena of Nature—the avalanche, the earthquake, and the storm. All around us are indications of beneficence in Nature—the growing corn and the springing flower. Here, then, Nature, with its hard, solid facts, is a realm of human experience. It is on this earth and beneath this sky that we have to live. From this earth we must take our food, and upon this earth we must build our homes, and by the light of sun and star we must guide our way.

(2) But there is another, and that is the realm of *history*. We are not merely set down as isolated beings on this little plane of earth, to live our life and then to die. We come into this world as one of a great succession of human beings that have fared forth as it were from the womb of time across the surface of the world, that have formed civilizations, that have created empires, that have slowly built up for themselves knowledge of the world in which they live. We live not merely in the realm of experience which we call Nature, but also in that other realm of experience which we call history.

(3) There is a third realm, and that is the little sanctuary realm which belongs to every human being, the realm and kingdom of *one's own soul*. And within that realm, unknown to anyone save to the Most High God, there goes on a lonely conflict from year to year, from the day when we fight our youthful passions to the day when we fight our middle-

[1] Charles Francis Richardson.

age temptations, from the day when we first knew what passion means to the day when we knew what—shall we say?—the spirit of meanness and avarice means; until the time of old age, when we begin to find the temptations which the very physical weariness of existence may bring upon us. And in that experience our soul plays its part. There is a drama, perchance a tragedy, enacted within that region and kingdom of the soul. And this is the third realm, the realm of experience of every man and woman.

2. Now if God is to be to us a practical God, if, that is to say, we are to find Him a present help in every time of trouble, it is not by seeing Him intellectually merely, it is not by entering upon exhaustive philosophical inquiry only; it is by facing life with its many facts and looking into these three great regions and realms of experience that we shall be able to find out whether the God that meets us there is the God who is to bring help and assistance to us.

And the third realm is the most important of the three. For, however much we may regard with adoration and with humble awe the great Nature which is round about us, however much we may be enamoured and entranced by the story of human history, yet when we think of our personal life, it is really in the soul of our own being that we crave for the presence of God.

For the soul of man, the spirit of man, is by far the most important realm in all human history. What is it that has caused the great changes in history? Behind all the changes in history which we are accustomed to attribute to some great battle has lain the inner struggle in the soul of some man. The hour when Alexander resolved upon the conquest of the East was the hour when in the inner chamber of his own spirit there was fought out the conflict which ended in the triumph of his ambition. The day when Cæsar resolved to cross the Rubicon and fling, as it were, the sword before Rome, that day was preceded by the inner conflict in which he hesitated before the die was cast and the great and stern act was done. It is in the spirit of man that there has been fought out the prior conflict which has only afterwards been manifested on the battlefield.

Milton gave the picture of *Paradise Regained* simply by the delineation of the temptation of Christ, when the great resolve of Christ was made in the fullness of His manhood that He would stand upon the side of eternal right, and fight everlastingly against decaying wrong. It is in the spirit of man, in the sanctuary of the soul, that the biggest conflicts and those most far-reaching in their results have taken place.

For it is there that I found God. There was a time when all the deeps of my being cried out for that which they could nowhere find. Deep echoed to deep as in that stupendous conception in the Book of Job: 'Where shall wisdom be found? The depth of the mine saith, it is not in me! And the depth of the sea saith, It is not in me!' And so deep answered deep in a pitiful confession of mutual poverty. It is when the soul finds itself in such distress that it hears the voice of the Eternal. All the depth of the Cross's anguish, all the deeps of eternal love, become suddenly eloquent. Deep answers to deep, the deep that is in God to the deep that is in Man; and the new day has bravely dawned.

I knew not my wild heart, nor Who with me
Strove masterly, while hidden from my ken;
I knew not, through an age-long famine, when
I hungered for a largeness like the sea,
For space, for freedom, scope, infinity,
Beyond the horizon-line of time and men,—
O Love at home, content co-citizen,
With thankless clay! that all of these were Thee.
Lord, call me in now, that my soul may change
Her folly for Thy rest: what wing can range
If three dear nails of Thine have pierced it through?
Here will I stay, and vying with Thee so
That in Thy greatness great I vow to grow,
And prove, past death, a godlike lover too.[1]

[1] *Louise Imogen Guiney*, 201.

The Home Life.

Job xxix. 5.—'When my children were about me.'

The Book of Job is an ancient and marvellous drama. It still throbs with human passion. Far away and strange though the scenery of it seems to be, the man himself who is the centre of the tragedy appears to be very like ourselves in his mental conflicts and in his sad experiences. We can reach across the wide gulf of the centuries and clasp hands with him, and feel the better for it.

Here Job is represented as looking back with sadness upon days gone by, when his children—seven sons and three daughters—were about him, as happy a family as ever lived. He could recall days of sweet fellowship when they joined in acts of worship, and, according to the custom of the time, the father, priest of his own house, offered burnt-offerings 'according to the number of them all,' by which he dedicated each one afresh to Jehovah as a living sacrifice. This he had not failed to do on that woeful day when they all met in their eldest brother's house, and in the midst of their festivities were killed. Job had silently received the news that all his property had gone, and that, rich though he had been, he was now poor as any wandering nomad; but now he broke out into a cry, a cry not of reproach but of trust, which is still echoed by Christian souls amid their losses: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' The tragedy made its mark upon him for life, brave, patient, and pious though he was, and it was with sadness that amid his talkative friends he looked back to the happy home which had once been his and cried, 'Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when . . . my children were about me.'

In this old picture of happy family relationships, enjoyed for a time and then sadly broken up, let us seek some helpful suggestions amidst our own experiences.

1. In the present day we find it more difficult than it was in a simpler state of society to have the children about us. The home is so often at a distance from the business; the claims on one's energies are so numerous and so clamant, that to get a quiet time with our dear ones demands some forethought and planning. But it deserves to be planned for, so rich will it prove in result. No doubt schools are far more efficient and attractive than they used to be, but even the wisest and the most sympathetic teacher can never take the place of the father and mother, or do their work. And if this is true of ordinary education given for six days, by trained teachers, it is obviously true of religious instruction. If this country is to be what it has been in the past, if as a nation we are to stand in the premier rank of civilized Christian people, the home must be made far more of than it is to-day. Even intelligent and religious people with noble ideals, who have served the nation well, have sometimes neglected this duty. It is said that John Howard, who visited and reformed the prisons of Europe, had the shame and sorrow of seeing his own son go to ruin as the result of his neglected home. If this be true of a man who was so well occupied, what shall be said of women in society, or of men involved in too numerous engagements, who seldom see their children except when they are asleep, who never care for and plan for happy family gatherings, and who never get a quiet talk about things of the higher life? Are there not many who will have to confess to the great Lord and Master of us all, 'They made me a keeper of vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept'?

¶ It may be a pleasant thing for the young mother to relegate her duties to her children to those who will serve both her and them faithfully, while she has her leisure for social life. But to see her name recorded amongst fashionable arrivals, or the wearers of pretty costumes, or the honoured at some function of society, is not for a moment to be compared to the writing of a sweet and holy influence upon the heart of a child. Leaving the memory of a fair young figure upon the wondering eye of a child who has been permitted to sit up to see the elders of the house going off to some fashionable scene is not comparable

to the joy of fashioning that young heart itself into a form of beauty with all the graciousness of a noble life. Why is it that young men oftentimes grow up with but a very slender tie of affection, or even of esteem, for the father, and many a girl leaves the home of her parents without a regret, or even with intense relief? It is because father and mother have forgotten that 'when the children were with them' is the time for teaching, not the teaching of dry unlovely lessons, but the teaching of a noble and generous character.[1]

2. We cannot count upon the children being always with us. As we get on in life the prattle of children's voices, the timid knock at the bedroom door, the joyful clamorous entry, the early morning romp, are only memories. The children are children no more, though to some extent they will always seem to be children to the fathers and mothers. Still, think of them as we may, they become men and women almost before we notice it, with plans of their own, work of their own, perhaps homes of their own, and then it is well if with thankfulness, not with regret, we think of the time 'when the children were about us.' This natural change which comes from development we would not, of course, have otherwise, so long as the old affection remains. For there are loves which never die. They enter into the very fabric of the soul, and are like cloth dyed ingrain, in which the tint is not lost so long as two threads hold together.

And what if the children are not with us because they have grown up and scattered—have gone out to those larger duties and wider spheres which life has for all? How blessed is the multiplication! How bright the ring ripple sent in wider lines to the shore! Your life is being multiplied and sent forth in larger lines than it could be in you alone.

Happy the father who speaks through his sons! Blessed the mother whose daughters re-echo the influences of her motherhood and hand down her gracious and Christly character in the generations that succeed.

[1] L. D. Bevan.

3. But death is more inexorable than duty in the breaking up of home. Who is there that does not know it from sad experience? How many have seen their dear ones pass away into the invisible. How many long for the 'touch of a vanished hand,' and would give all they possess for the 'sound of a voice that is still.' There are empty places in the heart, which the engagements and the beauties and the amusements of life can never fill. Nothing ever can fill them but those who went out of them, and left them so empty until this hour. But, blessed be God, there is hope for the future as well as thankfulness for the past, and we look onward as well as backward, while we think of the time when our children are about us.

¶ When the first break came in George MacDonald's family, and he and his wife had to mourn the loss of a beloved daughter, the poet wrote these lines to comfort the sorrowing mother:

To tell thee that our blessed child
Is watching thee from somewhere nigh,
Mourns with thee when thy agony grows wild,
Sits sometimes by thy bed while slow the hours go by,

Were but to mock thy weary pain
With pleasant fancies of a half-held creed,
To gather up and offer thee again
What thou hadst cast away as nothing to thy need.

But when the Shepherd great was dead
Death did but let the Shepherd's glory out;
She heard his voice and followed where he led—
He were no Shepherd now, not leading her about.

Take courage fresh, my Wife, this day
Step out with me to find her new abode;
We go together, cannot lose the way,
The wearier our feet, the shorter still the road.

Let us go on. We do not care
For aught but life that is all one with love:

We seek not death, but still we climb the stair
Where death is one wide landing to the rooms above.[1]

Active Goodness.

Job xxix. 15.—'I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame.'

In his Cunningham Lectures on Jeremiah, Dr. John Skinner touches upon the self-vindication in which that prophet sometimes engages, and which is found still more frequently in the Psalms. This sense of satisfaction, he says, is not altogether agreeable to the modern religious mind. 'There is in it an insistent protestation of integrity which savours of self-righteousness.' It is the difference Christ has made. 'We miss the utter abnegation of merit, the emptying of self, the absolute dependence on a goodness and a love outside of ourselves which regards not our desert but our need, such as are expressed in many favourite Christian hymns.'

And Dr. Skinner quotes the best example that can be found. It is Christina Rossetti's:

None other Lamb, none other name,
None other hope in heaven or earth or sea.
None other hiding-place from guilt and shame,
None beside Thee!

My faith burns low, my hope burns low;
Only my heart's desire cries out in me
By the deep thunder of its want and woe,
Cries out to Thee.

Lord, Thou art Life, though I be dead;
Love's fire art Thou, however cold I be;
Nor heaven have I, nor place to lay my head,
Nor home, but Thee.

Then he adds: 'But on the other hand the strong ethical sense of the Psalmists and Jeremiah supplies a needful corrective to the opposite error to which evangelical piety is itself exposed. For if the too obtrusive consciousness of moral sincerity as a claim on the Divine mercy involves the danger of spiritual pride, the absence of the thing itself would be fatal to all true godliness; and there is a hypocrisy of self-depreciation into which a spurious and sentimental spirituality is apt to fall.'

Job's self-vindication is not self-righteousness. It is not egotism. It is not the utterance of a puffed up spirit. Egotism is too frequently the child of the shallows. Rarely, if ever, does it issue out of a deep and troubled heart. Egotism flourishes best where profound sorrow is least known. And here is a man who is overwhelmed with sorrow. He is sitting in great loneliness of soul. Death has darkened every window in his home, and he is burdened with the weight of an almost intolerable grief. This is no place in which to find light, egotistical speech. Whatever words this man may speak will be crushed out of him by the very burden of his grief. It is a cry of a pained soul feeling about for comfort. It is a man going into his yesterdays to find some solace for the sorrow of to-day. He is calling upon memory to provide a little heart's-ease for his present bitter distress.

'I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. . . . I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out.' Thrice happy the man who can call such memories to help him in the hour of his distress! If the essence of Christianity be love, and love be beneficence, this passage from the old-world drama enshrines the very genius of the Christian life. 'The poor that cried,' and 'the fatherless,' and 'those ready to perish,' and the 'widow' and the 'lame' and the 'blind' still make their appeals in the land, and it is true to-day as ever that the only Christian response is the one that was made by the Patriarch Job.

1. Such active goodness as Job's has its roots in the knowledge of God. 'When the ear heard me, then it blessed me, when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me,' for the mention of Job's name evoked

[1] *George MacDonald and His Wife*, 485.

thanksgiving and his very presence cheered. There are such men to-day, the mention of whose name will kindle the smile of gladness, and whose very shadow will soothe. Men and women there are into whose very being compassion is woven, as it was with Job.

Job's faith in God was not mere contemplation. Of the meditative, contemplative side of the Christian life let none speak lightly. It is much needed in these days of rush and competition. Nor can strong and true character be developed where it is altogether lacking. Yet deeds, not words however beautiful and vision-filled, are the proofs of vital faith in God: 'Show Me your faith by your works.' Job's friendship and communion with God had its spontaneous outcome in his works of compassion. The cloistered cell may have upon its walls the pictures of exquisite vision, yet if that be all, the cell is a snare and the picture a delusion.

¶ As faith is to works so light is to heat, and while you can chemically discriminate between a candle's light and heat, yet put out the candle and good-bye both.[1]

2. But if the roots of active goodness are in God, its immediate occasion is suffering. 'I do not think,' says Dr. J. H. Jowett, 'we shall ever have a really deep feeling for our fellow-sufferers until we have deeply suffered too. You begin to pray for the sailors when your own boy is on the deep! When you have a crippled child what a heart you have for the maimed! The funeral procession in the street wears quite another appearance when one has gone from your own doors! It sometimes seems as though God cannot draw us together in common feeling without taking us through a common sorrow. There is nothing that so welds hearts together as simultaneous passage through a common grief. Sundered brothers are bound together again at their mother's grave. I know of nothing more pathetic in the life of Browning than the reconciliation of himself and the great actor Macready. They had been close and intimate friends, but for some trifle or other they quarrelled, and each went his own way, and for years their helpful intercourse was broken. Then came a great trouble. About the same time they lost their wives, and a little while after, as each was walking out in his loneliness in a quiet way in a London suburb, they suddenly met, face to face, and Browning, with a great burst of emotion, seized his old friend's hand, and said, "Oh, Macready"; and Macready, with an aching heart, replied, "Oh, Browning." That was all they could say to each other, and in the fires of a great and common grief the two severed lives were welded again. God brings us together by common suffering. Our sympathy is born out of our sorrow, like fragrance from a crushed and beaten rose. Those who have felt the pinch of poverty have the deeper fellow-feeling with the poor.'[1]

[1] Dan Crawford, *Back to the Long Grass*, 225.

The Unseen Beyond.

Job xxxi. 26-28.—'If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above.'

In this whole chapter, Job is on his defence. You will find the charges levelled against him by the miserable comforters who came to bless but stayed to curse, in the 20th to the 22nd chapters of this great drama. The charges are various. But perhaps the one that went most to his heart, because he felt it included all the rest, was the charge or insinuation that he had secretly or openly offered some great offence to God, whom he professed to worship, and that, therefore, these calamities had come upon him.

Job repudiates this, in his own case at all events. His assertion here is that never, even furtively, has he as much as kissed his hand, in token of adoration and homage, to the sun and moon and all the glory of the skies. He has never, even in secret, when no one could see him, bent his head to the great sun-god that to many minds seemed to be ruling over all.

The force of this temptation, or at any rate its form, is Oriental, and it can hardly be appreciated at once except by those who have

[1] J. H. Jowett, in *The Examiner*, Sept. 3, 1903.

had to live and travel in tropical or semi-tropical countries. Under our climate and civilization we can barely conceive the fascination, almost the tyranny, exercised over the primitive mind by these brilliant heavenly bodies which move through cloudless skies with unearthly grandeur, the emblems not simply of a weird beauty but of a varied power, since upon them the health and fortunes and even the movements of men largely depended. It is little wonder that the sun and moon were worshipped in Arabia and in Assyria, and that this tempting superstition struggled up occasionally like a bright, foreign weed among the Hebrews themselves. Insensibly the sun and moon entered so directly into the business of life, that even a devout soul like Job, who was no votary of these shining bodies, found he had to resist, as an actual temptation, the impulse to wave a kiss to the upper lights—so obvious, so strong, so entrancing—that touched his life at almost every hour, very much as the Irish peasant of to-day, under some religious emotion drawn from the ancient paganism of his race, will furtively cross himself at the first sight of the new moon. The very habits of his neighbours would suggest some momentary act of adoration to the deities they honoured. It was difficult for him not to let his heart be secretly enticed by a prevalent superstition which was often almost indistinguishable from religious feeling, or to throw a hasty kiss to the great lights of comfort and terror which seemed the very masters of his existence.

¶ Madame Duclaux, in her book on *The French Ideal* observes that 'Pascal is the least pantheistic of thinkers. Though none, like this mathematician, has described the attraction of the Infinite, and the mysterious abyss of the planet-sprinkled sky, yet he never lets these vague depths absorb his worship; and he might say, like Job, "I have seen the moon advance in her majesty, and I have not bowed the knee!" '[1]

1. An Oriental temptation! Yes, but men and women are being enticed to-day by precisely the same feeling that haunted the ancient nomad on the plains of the East, the feeling that, after all, things visible and outward present the standards by which life should be regulated. The great questions of religious experience are often old questions. For us they are newly shaped and differently stated, perhaps, but ultimately they remain the same. Analyze them, and they turn out to be perennial. It is still a moral discipline to resist the fascination of what meets and moves the senses. It is still a strain to refuse our moral reverence to the physical and material phenomena which bulk so largely in the scheme of our actual life. Over our work and pleasure alike they preside, not always gross or vulgar, thrusting themselves upon our notice, apparently owning no Divine control, suggesting no higher providence, claiming to be considered, and appealing both to our sense of admiration and to our prudence. Take the things of this world in any of the practical and tangible shapes which affect our employment and enjoyment. They have a part to play in human life. 'Blindness to the glory of the world and irreverence towards its spiritual forces are the worst of passports to any Church worthy of the name.' For a Christian man to neglect or depreciate the significance of power or wealth or culture or art or trade or politics or science is as disastrous as it would be for a traveller in the East to expose himself rashly to the sun, or for a nomad to regulate his nocturnal movements without heeding the phases of the moon. But for one person who suffers from such religious imprudence there are probably nine who are in danger of the opposite temptation—to let these interests become a substitute for God. In the State, in the Church, and in the family we are exposed—often to our great loss—to the dazzling prestige of the material world. It may usurp an importance in our minds to which it has no right, and we may be induced to let ourselves become engrossed with certain aspects of its brilliance and influence to the exclusion or the displacement of anything like that reverence for 'the God who is above' which is essential to Christianity.

We may never take off the hat to the things that are seen. We may never be dazzled by

[1] J. Moffatt.

earthly ambitions, dignities and institutions, and all the great powers that are calculated to impress the human imagination. But did we never find ourselves secretly, in the heart of business, in the moment when we were not quite ourselves, being seduced away from pure, spiritual objects and purposes, to rest our affection, and to base our ambition, on the things most eaten by the moths and that rust away? He indeed is a man of integrity who can stand in the world to-day, surrounded by all the majestic influences that strike and allure the imagination and the heart, and be able to say, 'I have never looked upon gold as an idol; I have never given an envious look at those with whom the world seems to go so wonderfully well; I have never even kissed my hand to the great idols in the market-place, the things that men reverence and prize and gamble their souls away for; I have never yielded my soul or conscience to them.' It is a great triumph to be able to say to-day, 'not to sun, moon, or any modern idol, have I kissed the hand: I have not denied the Lord.'

2. Some, owing to temperament, are more liable to this temptation than others; and the force of the temptation varies according to circumstances. In one form it becomes a scientific materialism, in another the aggressively secular temper which longs to survey

> The universal Nothing undisgraced
> By pert obtrusion of some old church-spire
> I' the distance.

But with people who, like Job, are neither speculative nor irreligious it tends to become an almost involuntary susceptibility to the spirit of the age, which slowly saps the forces of self-sacrifice and prayer and spiritual enterprise. The splendour of the sun and moon thrills even the European traveller to a half-sympathy with the impulsive homage which an Oriental will pay to these heavenly bodies. All day long, with ache and glare, the heat which elsewhere ministers to luxuriant growth pours like scorching rain upon the sands. Night falls, and the moon succeeds this fiery torment with ruddy or silvery light for the wayfarer. Where can one escape the penetrating influence of these shining powers, which seem to have the earth at their mercy? So it is, in a corresponding sense, with the pageant of positive objects and actual forces, full of colour and motion, which in modern civilization seem not so much to deny as to ignore God altogether, with their sweep of massed influence and tangible achievements, never absent from the spheres of human interest and imagination. They are so solid, so persuasive, so steady. We feel our heart sometimes flutter, in spite of itself, as a wave of secret delight comes over our better mind. 'Here is real life,' we are tempted to say, 'here is something definite and substantial, to live for and to live by, a system of principles and aims which is both intelligible and promising.'

Does it not run down into a very simple alternative? Where does the seen concentrate and where does the unseen concentrate in our lives? The seen concentrates in the self, and the unseen concentrates in Christ. The one is not the ideal, the other is. These are the deities between which we must choose. Selfishness is the great original paganism of the human heart, the perennial superstition, the worship of self. It is the last paganism that will be dislodged. It is the continuous alternative to the unseen Lord, the Christ of God. The question to be answered is, Am I to live for myself? Am I to make personal enjoyment and personal aggrandisement my chief end? Am I to exclude myself from the world's great need, and become obdurate to the cry of the helpless? Is the end of my life to be self-gratification, or the use of self for the good of the world? That is the cult of natural religion, and it is the religion of a great many people. Over against that is the ideal, the unseen Christ. It all comes to that. Shall I go to my work thinking only of my own self-glory, and my own comfort, and what I can do to advance my name, to prepare for my own future in this world, or shall I go determined that this wonderful Saviour, who was once dead and is alive again, who lived a human life, who yielded up His life for me, shall have my life? The best wisdom and the highest chivalry on my part is to lose my life

for Him, for by so losing it I keep it unto life eternal.

I wish a greater knowledge, then t'attaine
The knowledge of *my selfe:* A greater Gaine
Then to augment *my selfe;* A greater Treasure
Then to enjoy *my selfe;* A greater Pleasure
Then to content *my selfe;* How slight, and vaine
Is all selfe-Knowledge, Pleasure, Treasure, Gaine;
Vnlesse my better knowledge could retrieve
My Christ; unles my better Gaine could thrive
In Christ; unles my better Wealth grow rich
In Christ; unles my better Pleasure pitch
On Christ; Or else my Knowledge will proclaime
To my own heart how ignorant I am:
Or else my Gaine, so ill improv'd, will shame
My Trade, and shew how much declin'd I am;
Or else my Treasure will but blurre my name
With *Bankrupt,* and divulge how poor I am;
Or else my Pleasures, that so much *inflame*
My Thoughts, will blabb how full of sores I am:
Lord, keep me from *my Selfe;* 'Tis best for me,
Never to owne my *Selfe,* if not in *Thee.*[1]

The Work of the Spirit in Man.

Job xxxii. 8.—'There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding' (RV).

The two words 'spirit' and 'inspiration' are of course only different forms of the same word, and the spirit in man is that capacity in him which enables him to become the recipient of the Almighty's inspiriting. It is so much ability on man's part to receive a Divine inbreathing set over against the power there is on God's part to communicate a Divine inbreathing. 'There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.'

Elihu is the speaker. Among the *dramatis personæ* of the Book of Job this young man has an interest of his own. He did not make his voice heard until the argument was far advanced. He felt that he ought to keep silence in the presence of his seniors. His companions were older than he, and 'days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.' At length he was constrained to break his silence. He justified himself by saying, 'There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding.' Life, he says in effect, is not organized on mechanical lines. Wisdom does not necessarily go with age, or understanding with rank. Man's greatness and wisdom depend on the supremacy of the spirit within him, and the inspiration of the breath of the Almighty. He has a spiritual nature, capable of responding to the energizing of the Spirit of God. Because this is so, great and wise men often arise at the most unexpected times, and in the most unexpected place. A saint appears in corrupt surroundings, a prophet is born in a degenerate age, or a seer arises among an effete people. Why? Because 'there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding.'

Perhaps if we thought more about inspiration as it is presented for our consideration by Elihu we should be better able to deal with the problems connected with the inspired character of the Holy Word. The inspiration of the Almighty, as this text sets it before us, has to do, in a purely general way, with God's own personal communication of Himself to us. His imparting to us at the spirit-point of our being the energies of His own wisdom, holiness, and power. It is not our concern to understand how this is done. It is more incumbent upon us to bring ourselves to realize that in God's order of things it should be done, and that in man's disturbance of Divine arrangement it is so feebly and so interruptedly done. The Bible does not teach that we should allow to the prophets, apostles, and olden saints of God any monoply of inspiration. There is always the possibility of beauty where there is an unsealed human eye; of music, where there is an unstopped human ear; and of inspiration, where there is a receptive human spirit, a spirit lying before God like a harp-string that waits to be stirred into song.

[1] Francis Quarles.

No man can have studied his own character attentively, or regarded his own achievements meditatively, without realizing that, unless there has entered into him something that is not originally of him, his most conspicuous traits are the languor of his moral life, and the poverty and insipidity of that life's exterior fruitage.

1. And so the first work of inspiration is to create in us fresh personal vigour, and new spiritual animation. We work at our own characters as a painter works at his canvas, and a sculptor at his marble. It is only painted canvas and elaborated marble when it is done. It does not breathe. It shows no pulse-beat. Character cannot be constructed. It cannot be put together. It needs first of all a principle that is animated, and one, therefore, that is animating. It wants an impulse more glowing, determined, and passionate than anything we are possessed of naturally. It is all a mistake that we cannot be good and manly without being scrupulously and studiously good. There is too much mechanism about our virtue. It is a fine criticism that is passed by a modern admirer of Shakespeare, when he writes of him: 'We never see Shakespeare's characters hanging over their virtues, or nursing and cosseting them, as if they were specially tender of them, and fearful lest they might catch cold.' And the same thought works itself out in all variety of fine expression and deep suggestion in Pauline exhortations to Christian living and doing. We need nothing so much as a determining life-force at the core of character, an impulse from out the very soul of God, that shall hold us in its warm, steady, and irresistible grip, and impel us with a momentum that has the very pressure of Jehovah in it. If we have attained to a live manliness, and a heart so fed from out the veins of the Divine life that the throbbings of our heart synchronize with the throbbings of God's heart, we are in no danger. 'All virtue to be safe must be enthusiastic,' it has been said, and well said, if we will understand by enthusiasm here that which the word itself etymologically imports —'God in us.'

¶ The real originals . . . are concerned, it is true, much with themselves, but in their own way. Endowed with this mysterious possession of the inner life, with all its vastness of possible good and evil, they study its nature, examine its powers, its limitations, explore it backward in search of its source. The search brings them in contact with a vaster life than their own, a life which lays upon them its obligations, its imperatives. And so they become original by dint of a force that is behind them, the great Original which seeks to express itself within and through them. And so they move on to great things; to greater than they know. 'The man who goes farthest,' said Cromwell, 'is the man who does not know where he is going.' But he is sure that Another knows. The original man is a man of large convictions. He has to believe much in order to do much. Says a modern French writer: '*Le peu que nous croyons tient au peu que nous sommes*' (the littleness of our belief is a measure of the littleness of our character). To believe nothing is to do nothing. The most conspicuous figures in history have been people of the widest, firmest faith. They have cut so deep into the world's life because of the immensity of the pressure behind them. Whether it is Augustine in the fifth century, or Bernard in the twelfth, or Francis of Assisi in the thirteenth, or Luther in the sixteenth, the originators of the world's best and deepest life have ever been men of belief; not ours, perhaps, but always of their own.

And yet, observe, these men were always something more than their creed. They derived their force from their vital connection with the highest that they knew. They fed at the sources of life. And this life, which dominated them, delighted to show itself in richer, subtler forms than the beliefs which they held. The character in them was so far beyond words. The personality they had reached had become a tree on which grew all manner of fruits. Their followers felt a fascination which could not be put into speech, because it was beyond speech. It is holiness which gives the world its greatest surprises. Thinking nothing of itself, it is the greatest self the world possesses. Our own age, has, in large

measure, to reform its convictions; but its one chance of progress is in men and women whose allegiance is as true as theirs of old to the highest and best; whose life, open as was theirs to the infinite, receives from it the continuous reinforcement of its incalculable forces.[1]

2. Another work of inspiration is to create in us fresh and vivid perceptions of the Divine truth: 'In his light we shall see light.' It is nothing short of inspiration that qualifies us to apprehend the truth of God's Word. Our prayers often imply as much. But in this, as in other matters, our prayers are often at a higher level than our practice or our philosophy. We need as much inspiration to enable us to read the Bible as its authors needed to fit them to write it. The faculty that will solve a problem of geometry is not the faculty that will solve a problem of Scripture. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' When the Psalmist would behold wondrous things in the Scriptures he cried to God, 'Open thou mine eyes.' And this leads us on to a word respecting Christian opinion and Christian creed.

No Christian creed is ever constructed. It may grow, but it can never be built. It cannot be put together from the outside any more than character can. The reference here is not to men's philosophy of religion, but to Christian creed in its closest and best sense. A Christian creed is a matter of the individual. It is a form in which he shapes his own experience of the things of God and of his own soul. It is putting into the vernacular of his own thought what God has shown to him of the Divine being and ways. A creed in its truest sense cannot, then, be taught any more than holiness can be taught. It is a matter between each man and God, and has to do with what God has shown him of Himself. In point of directness and personalness every true creed will be like that of the man whose eyes had been opened: 'I can see'; inclusive of what he knew for himself, exclusive of all hearsay. Every Christian creed is like Peter's creed, of which Christ said, 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven'—an inspired creed. We might define a creed as *the way in which a Christian states to others what God has first revealed in him.* In this case it will be sure to bear upon it a good deal of the man himself, his personal idiosyncrasies, just as the books of the Bible tell us a great deal about the humanness of the men who were inspired to write them. No two men, therefore, will have exactly the same creed, except as neither has any creed, but borrows from a third who has.

3. Once more, the inspirations of the Almighty qualify us for all kinds of holy doing. We make toilsome work of doing good because we do not let the inspirations of God work in us, and we make irksome work of doing good because we do not let the inspirations of God work through us. There, too, we are strangers to our privileges and traitors to our prerogatives. The world is full of Divine energy, energy material and energy spiritual, and it all waits to be used for human empowerment. And our inventors and mechanics and manufacturers are incomparably more prompt in availing themselves of the physical energies of God than we are in adopting into our spiritual work His spiritual energies. Mechanicians, the world over, are harnessing the cosmic forces of the world to our busy world's work. Water is carrying our mills, wind is transporting our merchandise, steam is drawing our trains, electricity is running on our errands. The industries of the world are all of them leaning back upon the willing might of God. Ninety-nine per cent. of all the fruits of human industry, so called, are no other than the physical energies of God in the sky and the earth utilized to the production of staple commodities. But Divine spiritual power that is waiting to energize itself is kept out of the service by men's unfaith in its utility. Workers in the cause of Christ wear themselves out, shorten their lives, and exhaust their powers, because from egotism or unbelief they will operate the machinery of the Church by their own sheer strength,

[1] J. Brierley, *Religion and To-day*, 203.

when they might belt the ponderous mechanism of the Church to the enginery of the sky, might prolong their own powers and augment their own serviceableness, by letting spiritual agencies, like industrial ones, be bound to the dynamics of heaven and worked by the inspirations of the Almighty.

¶ We have more than enough of systems, of machinery, which, whether more or less perfect, will not go of itself. We may have done all that of ourselves we can do, and the moving spring may yet be wanting. '*The spirit of the living creature is in the wheels.*'

And just where our national dread of enthusiasm is the strongest, we have surely many enthusiasts among us, soldiers who go upon a spiritual warfare at their own cost, and builders who expect with such materials as earth can furnish to reach even unto Heaven. Yet God is a spirit, and Man is also a spirit, and all work that is done between God and Man must be done in the spirit—must be wrought from the centre outwards. The life that lies at the circumference of its guiding idea lies there but in faint outline, feebly drawn, like the outermost ripple on disturbed waters. We are anxious to *spread* the knowledge of God. This is *our work,* the end to which Christian exertion is chiefly directed, but before we can pursue it to any true result, God must also work a work within us, upon the deepening of which the extension of Christ's kingdom naturally, inevitably follows. For they who are rooted in the Lord will in Him bud and blossom, and fill the face of the earth with fruit.[1]

Instinct and Inspiration.

Job xxxii. 8.—'There is a spirit in man.'

The philosophy of M. Bergson has within the last thirty years aroused a world-wide interest. Its influence appears to be steadily growing both in Europe and in America. It is the 'live wire' in contemporary philosophy.

Bergson is an evolutionist. He speaks of the process of evolution as Nature's experiments, and he thinks that while there have been failures, these experiments have succeeded along two lines. These are, first, the line of the higher vertebrates culminating in man; second, the line of the Arthropoda leading to the insect family known as Hymenoptera. It seems probable that man and the community insects have been the latest species to evolve on this planet, and that therefore we may take them to represent the achievement of Nature's proximate purposes. On this showing the two main purposes of terrestrial evolution are intelligence and instinct. These two faculties are the pride respectively of the two premier and latest born species.[1]

What is the difference between them? It is a difference of the Spirit. It is the spirit within him that differentiates man from the lower animals. If you look at him on his physical side, you may say that he is an animal. But he is an animal with a spiritual nature, and that means he is not an animal. An animal is governed and directed by instinct. He always responds to a particular stimulus in a particular way. You can foretell, with a large measure of exactitude, what his actions will be under given circumstances. He is a kind of mechanism. But 'there is a spirit in man.' He is creative, free, and capable of fellowship with God.

1. *Man is creative.*—There is that in man which tells him that, while he is part of the universe, he is also greater than it. Man inhabits a body, which is the organ through which he establishes contact and communication with the material world. But it is his glory that, even while 'in the body pent,' he is able to escape from his prison-house. Sometimes there come to us experiences as to which we are afterwards uncertain whether we were 'in the body' or 'out of the body,' as Paul puts it. In spirit we are not chained to earth. We can soar; we can aspire; we can rise on swift and strong wings of thought and vision into the eternal places; we can enter the Holy City and dwell in its palaces. Man can detach himself from the world in which he

[1] Dora Greenwell, *The Patience of Hope*, 42.

[1] A. A. Luce, *Bergson's Doctrine of Intuition*, i. 20.

lives. He can stand apart from it and say, 'I am not part of that world. I can stamp the impress of my will upon it. I can re-create it.' He can so remould and refashion the things that are seen as to change the face of the world. He refuses to be dominated by Nature. All things have been put under his feet.

¶ Take any of the great human inventions. The pertinent question has been asked, 'How is it that the liner conquers the ocean?' and answered, 'Simply because there is more mind in the liner than in the ocean.' There are forces stored up in the ocean's breast vaster far by millions of times; but this creation of man's is the embodiment of ideas. 'A single idea formed in one tiny skull will chain your Niagara, and turn its wild rush into a humble factory worker.'[1]

Nor is it simply on material things, which can be seen and touched and handled, that man is able to bring his creative power to bear. He is able to create melodies and harmonies that enchant the soul and exalt it to heaven. The song of the nightingale and the lark is uplifting, but it is not original or creative. They sing the songs their ancestors sang. No one ever heard of a bird producing an oratorio. But man is ever discovering new combinations of sounds, and producing out of them the sublimest harmonies. Think, too, of the creative work of the great thinkers. They do not work with materials that can be seen, but they are creators. Their building materials are thoughts, ideas, intuitions, visions of the spirit, and out of them they create systems of thought which emancipate men and lead them on from stage to stage of civilization. Look, for instance, at the poet. He is an original creator. He does not sing as others sing. He is not an echo of his forerunners. While he is 'musing the fire burns' and 'the breath of the Almighty giveth him understanding.' Out of his inner consciousness he produces materials from which he builds a palace beautiful, to which multitudes flock for music, inspiration, spiritual sustenance, or shelter.

But man is also creative in an even higher sense. He possesses the power of detaching himself from himself. We are able to look at ourselves and to say, 'That man, so dwarfed and stunted, so scarred and marred, so ugly and unclean, is I.' Yes, but, blessed be God, we can add, 'I have it in my power, with the help of God, to recreate that man. I can make him straight and strong; I can heal the wounds and get rid of the scars; I can make him beautiful and clean.' We are not the mere product of our surroundings. We are not the victims of environment or the bond-slaves of heredity. We have that in us which can lay hold of God, and, by His mighty redeeming grace in Jesus Christ, we can refashion ourselves. We are creators—workers together with God. Linked to Him, we can remould our minds and wills and hearts, and those of the men and women around us. 'There is a spirit in man: and the breath of the Almighty giveth him understanding.'

¶ Patrick Daley was one of the first to profess conversion in connection with Mr. Moody's recent evangelistic services in Boston. He had been a staunch Roman Catholic by persuasion, but a desperate drunkard by practice. With an overpowering desire to be saved from his evil habit, he so far broke through the prejudices of his religion as to go and listen to the great evangelist. There he heard with astonishment and delight that the chief of sinners and the most hopeless of drunkards might find immediate forgiveness and deliverance through surrender to Jesus Christ. He went into the inquiry-room, and trustingly accepted the Saviour, and entered into great peace and joy in believing. Several weeks after his conversion, he approached me at the close of a meeting with his story and his question.

'You see, your reverence, I know a good thing when I get it; and when I found salvation, I could not keep it to myself. Peter Murphy lived in the upper story of the same tenement with me. Murphy was a worse drunkard than I, if such a thing could be; and we had gone on many a spree together. Well, when I got saved and washed clean in the blood of Christ, I was so happy I did not know what to do with myself. So I went up to Murphy, and told him what I had got.

[1] J. A. Robertson, *Concerning the Soul*, 21.

Poor Peter! he was just getting over a spree, and was pretty sick and sore, and just ready to do anything I told him. So I got him to sign the pledge, and then told him that Jesus alone could help him keep it. Then I got him on his knees, and made him pray and surrender to the Lord, as I had done. You never see such a change in a man as there was in him for the next week. I kept watch of him, and prayed for him, and helped him on the best I could, and, sure, he was a different man. Well, come Sunday morning, Joe Healey called round to pay his usual visit. This was the worst yet; for Healey used to come to see Murphy as regular as Sunday, always bringing a bottle of whisky with him, and these two would spree it all day, till they turned the whole house into a bedlam. Well, I saw Healey coming last Sunday morning, and I was afraid it would be all up with poor Murphy if he got with him. So when I went to the door to let him in, and he said, "Good-morning, Pat; is Murphy in?" I said, "*No; Murphy is out. He does not live here any longer*"; and in this way I sent Healey off, and saved Murphy from temptation.'

Here was the burden of his question; for he continued: 'Did I tell a lie? What I meant was that the *old Murphy did not live there any more.* For you know Mr. Moody told us that when a man is converted he is a new creature; old things have passed away. And I believe that Murphy is a new creature, and that the old Murphy does not live any more in that attic. That is what I meant. Did I tell a lie?'

Candid reader, what should I say? In the light of Paul's great saying, 'Nevertheless I live; *yet not I,* but Christ liveth in me,' can it be denied that Patrick Daley was right?[1]

2. *Man is made for freedom.*—There is something in man which impels him to seek after an ever-widening freedom. The spirit rebels against everything that would limit or impede its upward ascent. It revolts against everything in material conditions that would subdue or enslave it. The spirit regards as axiomatic the subjection of Nature to itself. It does not act with the mechanical precision of a piece of machinery. The supreme law of its life is freedom.

We have reached a stage in the development of civilization at which the spirit of man has to wage a fierce fight with machinery. Last century witnessed phenomenal scientific progress. We have liberated mighty forces of a potency as yet unrealized, and we have used them for the service and, alas! for the disservice of man. The question which confronts us to-day is whether Science is to be our master or our slave—whether she is to be used as the servant of man's spirit, or is to bring the spirit beneath the tyranny of the machine.

¶ A recent writer has pointed out that the war was characterised by 'the triumph of man's inventive intellect over his powers of spiritual control.' He says that of all attempts to describe the soul of the war and of the society that made and endured it, only that of the painter arrives at the truth. Speaking of an exhibition of war pictures, he affirms that the subject treated by the artists 'is not man, but his handiwork; not soldiers, but the "things" which soldiers use. Reduced to form, they appear as vast intricacies of girders or spans, in white sheets of flame from roaring furnaces, in colossal hammers, in the bulk of huge transports, in the rush of destroyers through rough seas, in the mouths of monster guns pointing skywards. The next effort of the artist is to show what these "things" produce. Here again men hardly appear. All that is seen is wreckage—the splinters of trees, or the huge dents of shell-holes on the earth's surface. The human agents, soldiers or workers, look like ants in an ants' colony, or figures from a child's storehouse of toys. They are minders and tenders of machines; creators in the first instance, but pre-eminently and finally creatures of what they have made.' No one can deny the truth of this description, and it shows how far civilization has gone astray. The spirit rebels against the conditions which prevail. If life were what it ought to be, the figure of man would dominate the picture, and all that he has created and invented would appear as mere tools. It is a bad sign when our inventive genius outstrips

[1] *A. J. Gordon, D.D.*, 97ff.

our powers of spiritual control. The spirit in man which vanquishes Nature must set itself with the same zest and zeal to the task of conquering human nature. It is a great thing to harness the mighty energies of the natural world, but it is even greater to bring life under the guidance, control, and renewing activity of the all-conquering energies of the spiritual world. If man is to progress, spirit must reign supreme over machinery, and all the wondrous discoveries of the intellect must be brought into the service of the soul.[1]

But not only over Science must man be master. He must be master over himself. It is the spirit in man that gives him this freedom also. The friends of Christ, who have taken up His light burden and easy yoke, are, above all things, free men. 'I will walk at liberty,' says the Psalmist, 'for I seek thy precepts.' By accepting God's law we escape the tyranny of inordinate desires. 'Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.' For such people, the rival tyrannical desires gradually lose their power and attraction. The soul still cleaves at times to the dust, and is troubled above measure, and is a mark for the derision of the proud and the snares of the ungodly. But the quickening power of God is at work. His testimonies are the very joy of their heart; and they take up a new attitude to the sin of the world: 'Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.' 'Mine eyes run down with rivers of water, because they observe not thy law.' And as freedom results from keeping God's commandments, so, on the other hand, when it is full-grown, it will enable us to keep them more perfectly: 'I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.'

¶ The classic case of Colonel Gardiner is that of a man cured of sexual temptation in a single hour. To Mr. Spears the colonel said, 'I was effectually cured of all inclination to that sin I was so strongly addicted to that I thought nothing but shooting me through the head could have cured me of it; and all desire and inclination to it was removed, as entirely as if I had been a sucking child; nor did the temptation return to this day.' Mr. Webster's words on the same subject are these: 'One thing I have heard the colonel frequently say, that he was much addicted to impurity before his acquaintance with religion; but that, so soon as he was enlightened from above, he felt the power of the Holy Ghost changing his nature so wonderfully that his sanctification in this respect seemed more remarkable than in any other.'[1]

3. *Man is made for fellowship with God.*—God is a Spirit, and we too are spirit, and are therefore capable of fellowship with Him. The breath of the Almighty gives us understanding. We are not truly ourselves, we are not realizing our destiny, until our spirit has entered into fellowship with the infinite and eternal Spirit. The business of our life, the primary task of progress, is the cultivation of our spiritual nature, or, to use the language of our fathers, the saving of our souls. Everything else must be subservient to this. Our culture and our science, our commerce and our politics, our daily tasks and duties, our friendships and relationships—all must be bent to the service of our souls. Civilization mocks us if it enslaves or degrades or neglects the soul.

¶That Christianity has modified, in a greater or less degree, the world's life, and that it will continue so to do, he of course never questioned. 'The patient sunbeam brooding over the buried seed till it draws out the hidden germ which it contains is all the time warming the surrounding atmosphere.' But this result is to be considered as entirely subsidiary to the purposes of God in the present age. 'Civilization is not regeneration. Civilization puts Christianity into the world; regeneration takes man out of the world. Civilization attempts to diffuse God's life and truth among men, regeneration separates men unto God. The one process is pervasive; the other elective. The one makes men better citizens of earth; the other makes them citizens of heaven.'[2]

[1] H. M. Hughes.

[1] *A. J. Gordon, D.D.*, 312.

[2] W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 269.

Inspiration in Man.

Job xxxii. 8.—'The inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.'

Inspiration is a difficult word, which has not been made much easier by the explanations of the learned. But in a rough-and-ready way, perhaps, it may be characterized as influence. It is the influence of one person on another person, the influence of the Divine Person on the human person, the influence of the Spirit of God on the spirit of man. That is inspiration—the personal action of the personal God on persons.

Consider, then, some of the ways in which God's inspiration is felt.

1. Take, to begin with, the *intellectual* part of man. Have we not all known moments of sudden illumination, when some idea, some truth, some vision came flashing upon the mind, irradiating it with an inexplicable splendour? Whence did it come? The truth or beauty I perceive is not my own. I cannot make a truth. I cannot create a truth. It comes to me somehow—as a surprise, as a discovery. I find it as it is; I do not make it what it is. Nor have I power to command my highest thoughts. Nietzsche says somewhere: 'A thought comes when "it" wishes, not when "I" wish.' 'Whence and how my ideas come I know not nor can I force them,' writes Mozart. 'Often,' says Philo, 'when I have come to write out the doctrines of philosophy, though I knew well what I ought to say I have found my mind dry and barren, and renounced the task in despair. At other times, though I came empty, I was suddenly filled with thoughts showered on me from above like snowflakes.' Whence came those thoughts? That is just the problem. Whence came to the men of science the revelation of the laws that order and explain the seeming chaos of phenomena? Whence came to the philosophers those eternal truths and principles of which a Greek poet has said that 'mortal infirmity did not preside over their birth, nor shall forgetfulness ever lay them to sleep,' for 'there is in them a great divinity that grows not old'? Whence came to ourselves that unexpected vision, that sudden solution of a long-perplexing puzzle, that gust of conviction sweeping swiftly through the soul with overwhelming power? We sometimes talk of sages and of artists as 'inspired,' and the phrase is not merely a figure of speech. Deep down below the surface of our consciousness, down in the dimness of the abyss of our being, down at the unexplored foundations and roots of life, the Spirit of God has contact with the spirit of man. When the mind is enlightened, when truth becomes clear, when beauty enraptures, when a star-like idea blazes in upon the intellect, when we feel, as it were, a shock of the ineffable—it is then that the Spirit of God is moving mightily within us, and we are inspired, intellectually inspired, by Him.

¶ Sir James Barrie in his Rectorial Address at St. Andrews in 1922 spoke of this experience in his whimsical way, calling the influence which he felt as outside his own control by the humorous name of M'Connachie. And an older writer, Joel Chandler Harris, in a letter to his children, uses similar language, 'As for myself,' he says,—'though you could hardly call me a real, sure enough author—I never have anything but the vaguest ideas of what I am going to write; but when I take my pen in my hand, the rust clears away and the "other fellow" takes charge. You know all of us have two entities, or personalities. That is the reason you see and hear persons 'talking to themselves.' They are talking to the "other fellow." I have often asked my "other fellow" where he gets all his information, and how he can remember, in the nick of time, things that I have forgotten long ago; but he never satisfies my curiosity. He is simply a spectator of my folly until I seize a pen, and then he comes forward and takes charge.'[1]

¶ But Milton's way is better. The spirit that was in him—the genius as we usually call it—was regarded by him as God's gift, and he sought to use it so as to glorify the Giver. We have only to turn to the begin-

[1] F. C. Prescott, *The Poetic Mind*, 102.

ning of *Paradise Lost* for words which abundantly justify this remark—

And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That, to the height of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to man.

2. Take, next, the *moral* part of man. What is it that constitutes the constraining power of duty? Why is it that, almost in spite of themselves, men feel obliged to do their duty? Think of the force of that little word 'ought.' There are many great words and many potent words—'money' and 'pleasure' and 'reputation' and 'home' are among such words; but the 'ought' of duty is a greater word, and over and over again it outbalances all the rest. Here is the British soldier depicted by Rudyard Kipling. He is not by any means an ideal character. His language is not choice or his habits beyond criticism; in his morals and religion he leaves much to be desired. But see him in the supreme moment, when the battle is raging and death is hideously abroad; see him when all that he loves is on this side—sweetheart and wife, comfort and gain, a whole body and a long life—and when duty alone is on that side. What happens? Why, in case after case and instance after instance the man instinctively, half-blindly, half-unwillingly perhaps—impelled by a sort of 'demonic' possession—goes for his duty. All that he loves is in one scale and duty alone is in the other scale. Yet the first scale goes up and the second scale goes down. Duty wins. Why is it? May we not here again discern the effects of inspiration? 'Man's conscience,' runs a famous line of Byron, 'is the oracle of God.' And may we not say that the magic attraction of duty is the magnetism of God? Men feel the drawing of the 'Power that makes for righteousness.' They are carried beyond themselves by an unearthly energy. The Spirit of the Lord is upon them; they are filled and fired and morally inspired by Him.

3. Take, once more, the *affectional* part of man—the sphere of the heart, of the sentiments and emotions. Do we not find here much that can properly be accounted for only by inspiration? Think, for example, of love in its highest form—the Christian love. Christ says that we are to love our neighbour as ourselves. He says that we are to love all with whom we come in contact—the ugly, the dull, the wicked, the weak, the people who annoy us, the people who hate us, even the people who bore us and borrow from us. Nor are we justified in watering down that phrase. Our Lord says, Love. He does not say merely, Be considerate to these people. He does say, Love them; love them as yourselves; surround your uninteresting and uninterested neighbour with the same warm feeling and sympathy that you give to your own selves. But surely that is impossible. To unaided human nature it is ridiculously impossible. The practical man, the common-sense, business man must simply laugh at the idea. It is so impossible. And yet the thing has been done. The impossible has happened. There have been men, and women, who have achieved this unachievable, and have lived this love. And how do you account for that? How do you account for a Francis or a Xavier, for a John Howard or a Father Damien or a Florence Nightingale, for a thousand incarnate enigmas of Divine charity and philanthropy? We fall back on the explanation of St. John, 'If we love one another, God dwelleth in us.' That seems to be the secret—'God dwelleth in us.' Whenever we love—not with the sham love that is but self-love in disguise, but really, genuinely, self-forgetfully—then the very Spirit of Love is abiding in us, and we are inspired, affectionally inspired, by Him.

4. Finally, take the *religious* part of man. Most of us have had seasons of religious inspiration. How often in our exalted moments

—in prayer, in meditation, in the Sacrament of the Broken Body and the Blood that is shed —have we been shadowed by a Presence! How often have we been conscious of subtle feelings and vibrations that testify in the soul that God Himself is there! All that is best and holiest in our religious life is due to the stimulus of the inbreathing Deity. Aspiration, for instance—is it not from inspiration? 'Not without special grace,' writes Clement of Alexandria, 'does the soul put forth its wings.' Or faith—is it not the experience of the Presence of the Highest or, as Pascal has described it, 'God sensible to the heart' Yes, wherever we turn we find the mystery of God's action. The Christian life in its every phase is but one story—the story of a voice, of a vision, of a light, of a visitation, of an inspiration.[1]

I have heard the Voice of Jesus;
Tell me not of aught beside.
I have seen the Face of Jesus;
All my soul is satisfied.

The Reception of the Spirit,

Job xxxii. 8.—'The inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.'

Maeterlinck, in one of the finest of his essays, has a parable of some blind men who travelled a long distance that they might hear their god. They seated themselves on the steps of the sanctuary and waited and waited; and when someone asked them what they were doing out there in the courtyard, 'We are waiting,' they answered, shaking their heads, 'and God has not yet said a single word.' But they had not seen that the great brass doors of the temple were closed, and they knew not that the shrine within was all the while resounding with the voice of Deity.

Many of us to-day are not unlike the blind men of that legend. We are constantly wondering why God is not here. We look for Him in our lives, and we say that He appears not. We do not observe that, amid the throng and press of things, He is ever passing by We listen for His voice, and complain that all is silence. Yet never for an instant does He cease to speak, if we will but throw open the door and lend attentive ears. God is not dumb, nor dead, nor distant. He is present to-day, as He was present in the past, to inspire the faithful soul, and it is only our own blindness and stupidity and egotism that hinder the fact from being recognized. 'What is there between Him and thee?' writes a deep thinker. 'Nothing but thyself.' 'The clear sky bends over each man, little or great; let him uncover his head, there is nothing between him and infinite space.'

How can we best prepare to receive the Divine impressions? How can we put ourselves in the line of heavenly influences? What must we do to become effectually inspired? There are three practical laws conditioning inspiration.

1. The first of these laws is the *Law of Activity*. Be active, it says. Be alert. Be alive. Exercise your faculties. Cultivate your talents. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. He will never inspire you as corpses, only as living, acting, energising men. Activity is here the rule. There are, of course, special times and occasions when passivity may be necessary; when the soul must be still beneath the Hand of God, must become, as it were, an instrument whereon the Spirit may make music. But such cases are exceptional. 'God generally gives spiritual blessings,' writes Robert South, 'as He does temporal, that is, by the mediation of an active and vigorous industry.' Yes, activity is the rule. Do you wish to be inspired with truth? Then you must exercise your mental powers in quest of truth—think hard, face doubt, enquire, wrestle with problems, keep the mind at work. God's thought is kindled in the active brain. Or do you wish to be inspired with justice? Then with all your strength you must cultivate your moral powers. You must learn to decide for the right and to fight for the right. It is the most practical conscience that the Spirit most illuminates. Or do you wish to be inspired with love or faith or holiness? Then use to the full your affectional and religious powers; be active in love, be

[1] F. H. Dudden.

active in faith, be active in holiness. As a man acts, so is he acted on. What we put into life, that, pretty much, do we get out of life. The more we toil, the more we make effort, the more we think and will and trust and send out love, the more do we receive from the Giver of all good gifts, and the greater is our measure of the grace of inspiration.

2. The second law is the *Law of Expectancy*. It warns us to be ever on the watch for the coming of God, ever ready for His touch, ever receptive of His influence. For the danger is great that amid the activities of our life—however rightful they may be, and unexceptionable in themselves—we fail to pay attention to the Divine forces that encompass us. Our horizons grow restricted. We tend to be more and more absorbed in the immediate present. We are always so occupied; occupied with business, occupied with society, occupied with politics and speeches and the newspapers, occupied with the dominant sensation of the moment—the latest discovery, the freshest freak of fashion, the newest amusement, the most recent book; so occupied and interested and taken up and busy that God gets crowded out of our consciousness altogether. It is not that we disbelieve in God or disdain His inspiration; it is simply that we are so immersed in the noise and rush and scramble of our world that the Divine approaches to us pass unheeded. And so there is urgent need to cultivate expectancy—the habit of looking for God, of listening for His Voice, of keeping each part of our nature open to His inflow. By recollecting God, St. Francis de Sales used to say, we draw God unto us. Already One is standing at the threshold by our door, and at any time He may enter. At any hour, at any moment—as we think, as we work, as we read, as we walk in the street, as we gaze at a picture or listen to music or talk with a friend—at any hour, at any moment the Guest of our soul may come. Be ready for Him, then. Be prepared for Him. Expect Him. Expectancy is the second condition of inspiration.

3. The third is the *Law of Obedience*. 'It is necessary,' writes Pascal, 'to offer ourselves humbly to the inspiration.' Men often complain of the evanescence of God's influence. The Spirit, they tell us, comes and goes. Truth suddenly appears, and then as suddenly is withdrawn. There is no continuance, no consecutiveness. ''Tis with us,' cries Emerson, 'a flash of light, then a long darkness, then a flash again. . . . Could we but turn these fugitive sparkles into an astronomy of Copernican worlds!' And the experience undoubtedly is a familiar one. How often has the history of our own inspiration—intellectual or moral, affectional or religious—been but the history of 'the light that failed.' One moment we were walking in the sunshine near to God; the next, alone and helpless, we were stumbling in the darkness. And why is this? In general the reason lies in the fact that we do not see fit to obey the inspiration. We are wilful and self-assertive. We like to lead, not follow; to choose for ourselves a way, to force things to go our way. We are not content submissively to take God's way. We do not heed the Voice, we do not respond to the summons, we are not loyal to the prompting. And so the resisted influence by degrees grows weaker, and God at last departs and leaves us to go, if we please, astray. Here, then, we see the importance of the third law of inspiration. It is the principle of submission, of surrender, of obedience. It is the principle of St. Paul—'I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.' It is the principle of St. Augustine—'Give what Thou dost command, and command what Thou wilt.' It is the principle of Fénelon—'Demand, enjoin, forbid: what wilt Thou have me to do?' It is the principle of Newman—'Lead Thou me on.' It is the principle that breathes through the words of the quaint mediæval hymn:—

As the sunflower ever turning to the mighty sun,
With the faithfulness of fealty following only one,
So make me, Lord, to Thee.[1]

[1] F. H. Dudden.

Life.

Job xxxiii. 4.—'The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.'

Life is God's gift. We are the trustees of the Giver, unto whom at last we shall render account for every thought, word and deed.

1. Life, in its origin, is infinitely important. The birth of a babe is a mighty event. Unless there be something extraordinary in the circumstances, we do not attach the importance we ought to the event itself. It is only noble birth, distinguished birth, that is chronicled in the journals or announced with salvos of artillery. In the darkest hovel, in the dingiest attic or cellar, or in any place in which a human being sees the first glimpse of light, the eye of the Omniscient beholds an occurrence of prodigious moment. A life is begun, a life that shall never end. A heart begins to throb that shall beat to the keenest delight or the acutest anguish. More than this—a soul begins a career that shall outlast the earth on which it moves. The soul enters upon an existence that shall be untouched by time, when the sun is extinguished like a taper in the sky, the moon blotted out, and the heavens have been rolled together as a vesture and changed for ever.

¶ The Scandinavians have a very impressive allegory of human life. They represent it as a tree, the 'Igdrasil,' or the tree of existence, whose roots grow deep down in the soil of mystery; the trunk reaches above the clouds; its branches spread out over the globe. At the foot of it sit the Past, the Present, and the Future, watering the roots. Its boughs spread out through all lands and all time; every leaf of the tree is a biography, every fibre a word, a thought, or a deed; its boughs are the histories of nations; the rustle of it is the noise of human existence onward from of old; it grows amid the howling of the hurricane, it is the great tree of humanity. Now in that conception of the half savage Norsemen, we learn how they estimated the grandeur of human life. It is a transcendent, momentous thing, this living, bare living, thinking, feeling, deciding. It comes from God; He is its Author; it should rise toward God, its Giver, who is alone worthy of being served; that with God it may live forever.[1]

2. Life is transcendently precious from the services it may render to God in the advancement of His glory. Man was not created as a piece of guess-work, flung into existence as a waif. There is a purpose in the creation of every human being. What is the purpose of life? Is it advancement? Is it promotion? Is it merely the pursuit of happiness? Man was created to be happy, but to be more—to be holy. The wisdom of those Westminster Fathers who gathered in the Jerusalem chamber wrought it into the well-known phrase, 'Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.' That is the double aim of life: duty first, then happiness as the consequence; to bring in revenues of honour to God, to build up His Kingdom, spread His truth; to bring this whole world of His and lay it subject at the feet of the Son of God. That is the highest aim and end of existence, and everyone who has risen up to that purpose of life lives. That is the only way to employ the powers brought back to our homes from the sanctuary. That is the only idea of life to take into the toils and temptations of the week. That is the only idea of life to carry to God in the confessions and thanksgivings of the closet. That is the only idea of life on which to let the transcendent light of eternity fall. These powers, these gifts, the wealth earned, the influence imparted, are all to be laid at the feet of Him who gave His life for us. Life is real, momentous, clothed with an awful and an overwhelming responsibility to its possessor.

¶ I found myself lately studying with intense interest the biography of Baxter. For half a century that man gave himself to the service of Jesus with a perseverance and industry that shames such loiterers as you and I. Just think of a man that twice on every Lord's day proclaimed the gospel of his Master with most elaborate care and unflinch-

[1] T. L. Cuyler.

ing diligence; on the first two days of the week spent seven hours each day in instructing children of the parish, not omitting a single one on account of poverty or obscurity; thing of him as devoting one whole day of each week to care for their bodily welfare, devoting three days to study, during which he prepared one hundred and sixty instructive volumes saturated with the spirit of the word, among them that immortal *Saints' Everlasting Rest,* that has guided so many a believer up to glory. The influence of one such life as that changed the whole aspect of the town of Kidderminster. When he came to it, it swarmed with ignorance, profligacy, Sabbath-breaking, vice; when he left it the whole community had become sober and industrious, and a large portion converted and godly. He says: 'On the Lord's Day evening you may hear hundreds of families in their doors singing psalms or reading the Bible, as you pass along the streets.' Sixteen hundred sat down at one time to his communion-table. Nearly every house became a house of prayer.[1]

God's Sovereignty.

Job xxxiv. 29.—'When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble (RV 'condemn')? And when he hideth his face, who then can behold him?'

1. Much is doubted about God in this Book of Job, but one thing is never called in question—His sovereignty. Now the thought of God's sovereignty, the thought that He does according to His will, has different results in different minds.

(1) To some it is saddening. You catch its echo in some of the more despairing utterances of the Hebrew prophets, and particularly in Jeremiah's great parable of the Potter and the Wheel. You have it distinctly stated in the poetry of the Persian Omar, who flourished in the first quarter of the Twelfth century—when he cries that we are all

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days;
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

You have it stated afresh with infinite bitterness in the concluding words of Hardy's 'Tess'—'Justice was done: and the President of the Immortals had ended His sport with Tess.' And Hardy himself, in using the phrase, sends us back to the old Greek dramatists, all of whom felt a terror of the Gods, and felt themselves impotent before their wrath and their injustice. The absolute sovereignty of God, the indeterminable power of the Creator over His creatures, His perfect right to do as He will with man, regardless of either the merit or the demerit of the individual—this is one of the oldest, as it is one of the saddest, thoughts of the world, and has filled the human heart with terror and misgiving.

(2) But this thought is very far from producing in Elihu either sadness or incurable despair. Elihu is the youngest of the speakers in the drama, and he speaks with all the confidence of youth, with all its optimism, with all its sense of having obtained a new knowledge denied to the elders. How far his wisdom surpassed theirs it is not for us now to discuss, but it will be seen at once that he uses this tremendous truth of the absolute sovereignty of God in a new way, and draws from it not the lessons of despair but of hope.

He first states the absolute apportionment of good in men's lives—'When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?' Whatever we may or may not know of God, we do know that He gives good gifts to men—that He gives some good gift to every man, and from that we may argue that in the main His government of the world is not cruel or unjust.

The second thing he states is the concealment of the highest Good, which is the vision of God, the perfect knowledge of His ways—'When God hideth his face, who then can behold him?' In all lives, and even in those which we may variously call the happiest or the most fortunate, there is something hidden, something withdrawn, a door of mystery which no key of earth can unlock. There is the hidden face of God, hidden from us, as it

[1] T. L. Cuyler.

was from His own Son, when He cried in the lonely darkness of the cross, '*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.*' There are things that happen to us for which no explanation is vouchsafed, and for which none seems possible. In the journey of life we all find ourselves, at some time or other, confronted by the Sphinx of the desert, the inscrutable face with sightless eyes that stare right on, and lips that utter nothing, and we hear the wind of the desert, and the prophets of the wind, who cry

> Hushed in the infinite dark at the end ye shall be
> Restless feverish souls that travail and yearn;
> Lo, we have lifted the Veil—there is nothing to see;
> Lo, we have looked on the Scroll—there was nothing to learn.

Elihu does not accept this despairing verdict, but he does argue that no perfect solution of the universe is possible, that mystery is necessary in the education of man, and that man was never meant to know, at least while upon the earth, the full explanation of God's ways, which are past finding out.

And this leads him to a third thought, which is implied rather than expressed, namely, the wisdom and joy of a complete surrender to God. 'What is man that thou takest account of him,' said the Hebrew Psalmist—for God does take account of man, and man is therefore safe with God. 'I can look on terrible things with a steadier eye,' says one of our modern prophets, 'knowing as I do, that the world is not left to itself, but has a King who is its Redeemer.' And to this truth Job himself assents when he says, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him'; he had then 'reached his climax,' he had found the quietness which God gives in the midst of trouble; and while he dwelt in that refuge no arrows of outrageous fortune had power to wound him. So then we see that the indisputable sovereignty of God is capable of being stated in a way very different from that of Omar, or Euripides, or Thomas Hardy. It makes not for despair, but for the peace that passeth all understanding. It lifts man out of the transient, and gives him safe anchorage in the eternal. It makes him say with one of the great and true poets of our time—

> It fortifies my soul to know
> That tho' I perish, Truth is so:
> That howso'er I stray or range,
> Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change,
> I steadier step when I recall,
> That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall.

In all lives there is the hidden thing which is signified in the darkened face of God, in all lives also there may be the divine quietness of faith; and it is on the truth of the Divine sovereignty that man bases all his faith, and, enduring to the end, is saved.

2. Now let us turn from the statement and discussion of these thoughts, which we all feel to be abstract and difficult, to the illustrations of them which we find in general human experience. The value of an abstract thought is its practical effect on human conduct. What effect on human conduct has this sublime thought of the sovereignty of God had? For of all philosophies as of all lives Christ's word holds true—'By their fruits ye shall know them.'

(1) Turn, for example, to the life of St. Paul. That life touched an agony of vicissitude which few lives have known, and a mere recital of its sorrows might appal the bravest. It knew hunger, thirst, and weariness, the alienation of friends, and the most murderous hatred of enemies; the loss of all things, and of the things that noble men value most, not goods and wealth, but honour, esteem, and respect: it knew physical suffering so intense that Paul spoke of himself as in deaths oft and dying daily: it knew a contempt from men so complete that he says he had become as the offscouring of all things: it knew at last a violent death by martyrdom. The sufferings of Job, great as they were, are not comparable with the sufferings of Paul. And Paul knew also the withdrawn face of God, the denied prayer, the neglected appeal, the thorn in the flesh which caused him incurable and immitigable torture to his life's end. Yet the dominant note of Paul's life is triumph.

He not merely does not complain of his sufferings, but he rejoices in them. His letters are not a tragic drama like the Book of Job: they are as the music of trumpets pealing round the dark dome of life, a sound of 'harping symphonies and sevenfold hallelujahs!' And as you search his writings for the secret, you find it in the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans—'Whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?'

(2) Turn, again, to history. It is not surprising that more and more the thoughts of cultured Englishmen are turned toward the great Puritan movement, for it gives us the key to all that is most vital and enduring in national character. But the more that movement is studied the clearer does it become that its political force was really incidental—its real force was religious. One need not recall the speeches of Cromwell, the despatches of Blake, the psalms sung upon the battlefield—these are things familiar to us: but they all illustrate one truth—the sense of the sovereignty of God, which made the Puritan what he was. Those who see the Puritan only on the battlefield and in the council chamber see but one part of him: there is yet a nobler part portrayed in his religious experiences. It is no more than bare truth that Macaulay states of Puritanism when he says, 'One overpowering sentiment had subjugated to itself pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terror and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and their tears, their raptures and sorrows, but not for the things of this world. The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other.' On what subject we ask? On this tremendous subject of the sovereignty of God. If they cared little for kings, it was because they were devoted to the King of kings and Lord of lords: if they despised priests, it was because they knew themselves priests unto God by the mystery of a Divine call, and a truer ordination. They also knew the mystery of the hidden face of God—and of that let the tears of Fleetwood, and the cries of Cromwell bear witness. They knew calamity: but they also knew how to triumph over it. John Milton knew the worst calamity that can happen to the man of letters—the total loss of sight; but he uttered no petulant complaint, and he might well have written the noble lines which a modern poet has put into his mouth:—

> I have naught to fear,
> This darkness is the shadow of Thy wing;
> Beneath it I am almost sacred: here
> Can come no evil thing.

And John Milton would have said, not by way of accusation, but in vindication of the ways of God with man, 'Hath not the Potter power over the clay to do with it as He will?' The sense of the Divine sovereignty did not depress him: it inspired him. And it was the same with all the Puritans. The one subject on which their feelings were intense was the relation in which they stood to God: once sure of that, once convinced that God reigned and that they were called to be His children, His servants, and the sheep of His pasture—they were tranquil on every other subject, and could say, 'When God giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?'[1]

¶ 'The most interesting phasis,' says Carlyle, 'which the Reformation anywhere assumes, especially for us English, is that of Puritanism. In Luther's own country Protestantism soon dwindled into a rather barren affair: not a religion or faith, but rather now a theological jangling of argument, the proper seat of it not the heart; the essence of it sceptical contention; which indeed has jangled more and more, down to Voltaireism itself,—through Gustavus-Adolphus contentions onward to French-Revolution ones! But in our Island there arose a Puritanism, which even got itself established as a Presbyterianism and National Church among the Scotch; which came forth as a real business of the heart; and has produced in the world very notable fruit. In some senses, one may say it is the only phasis of Protestantism that ever got to

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Divine Challenge*, 53ff.

the rank of being a Faith, a true heart-communication with Heaven, and of exhibiting itself in History as such.'[1]

The spirit of Puritanism was a spirit of the most straightforward and simple piety. Never was a Christian congregation founded whose covenant was more adapted to all time than the covenant made six weeks after the landing of Governor Winthrop, and still inscribed upon the walls of the First Church of Boston. Never was a nobler exposition of the principles of Christian society than in Winthrop's discourse written upon his voyage. It removed the whole community out of a strait into a broad place. 'The only way to avoid shipwreck,' he says, 'and to provide for our prosperity, is to follow the counsel of Micah, "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God." For this work we must be knit together as one man. We must uphold a familiar commerce together, in all meekness, gentleness, patience, and liberality. So shall we keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, so that men shall say of succeeding plantations, "The Lord make it like to that of New England." '[2]

(3) Turn now to modern biography, and recall the spiritual struggles of Carlyle, and the great emancipation which he won for himself, and for multitudes who through his words have been made wise unto salvation. He himself has told us how he won that emancipation; 'God over all, God through all, and God in us all' was the sum and substance of his gospel. It is expressed again and again in all his works. When he rides by night past the old churchyard where the dead he loved were buried, an infinite peace comes upon him in the sense that God is over all. When the book on which he based all his hopes is burned, he speaks of the calamity as the chastisement of his invisible schoolmaster, and says, 'What can I sorrowing do but obey - obey and think it the best!' When he writes his magnificent description of the night before the battle of Dunbar the same note makes itself heard—'The hoarse sea moans doleful, swinging low and heavy against these whinstone bays: the sea and the tempest are abroad, and all else asleep but we—and there is One that rides upon the wings of the wind.' The Divine Sovereignty once more: the steadfast sense that the world is rightly governed, that what we call histories and events is but God working—this was the strength of Carlyle's soul, it was upon this he based his life, and it is this conviction that has given him an influence on the best minds of the world, such as no other man since the days of the Hebrew prophets has wielded.

Or turn to modern imaginative literature. Much of it is mere coloured froth: some of it glitters with the iridescent hues of decay: but here and there a book emerges which is what a good book should be, 'the precious life blood of a master spirit.' Take up the *Window in Thrums*, for example, and turn to the pathetic sketch called *Dead this Twenty Years*. It is merely the account of a child who died by accident twenty years before, and the mother's thoughts about it all, and her grief. And this is what she says, 'Thou God seest me,' she exclaims. 'Just when I came to "Thou God seest me," I let the book lie in my lap, for aince a body's sure o' that they're sure o' all: for I ken He was lookin' down when the cart gaed ower Joey, and He wanted to tak' my laddie to Himself.' And there is no other word said, or that can be said. To be sure that God reigns is to be sure of every thing, and when God giveth quietness, who then shall make trouble?[1]

The Speech of God.

'[illegible] xiii 14.- For God speaketh once, yea [illegible] it not.'

This old book carries us back to an age of the world when the aspect of everything differed from that of the present age. Were the dealings of the Spirit of God with the spirit of man also different then from what they now are, or were they identical? This is the interesting inquiry upon which we are to enter.

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Literary Life*, 81.

[1] *Heroes and Hero-Worship* 132.

[2] F. G. Peabody, *Sunday Evenings in the College Chapel*, 281.

1. The first way, says Elihu, in which God speaks is in *dream or vision:*

In a dream, in a vision of the night,
When deep sleep falleth upon men,
In slumberings upon the bed;
Then he openeth the ears of men,
And sealeth their instruction,
That he may withdraw man from his purpose,
And hide pride from man;
He keepeth back his soul from the pit,
And his life from perishing by the sword.

This may seem to carry us at once far from modern experience back into a visionary and unfamiliar past. But those who think so are not well acquainted with Christian biography; for in any collection of such experiences, even the most recent, there will be found instances in which a dream or vision has played a decisive part.

The state of the human mind in sleep is one of the great mysteries of existence. Some of those who have studied it most deeply have been led to the conclusion that the mind never sleeps, but, during the hours when the body is slumbering, goes wandering on through mazes of fancy and midst phantasmagorias of ever-changing splendour. Of such phantastic fabrics the great majority are valueless, and are swept out of the memory with the return of waking consciousness. But now and then something that is of value remains from the wreck. One of the most remarkable of the poems of Coleridge is the recollection of a dream. One of the most noted among living story-tellers asserts that his plots come to him in dreams; and there are few who cannot remember some valuable impression which, first visiting them in sleep, materialized in waking hours. Now why, among such impressions, should not religious ones have a place? We know that the forces of temptation are not idle whilst we are sleeping; because evil dreams are among the worst distresses of many a man striving after purity of soul. If, then, the powers of evil have access to the mind in sleep, why should not the Spirit of God have access to it too, to touch it to fine and noble issues?

Of course it would be easy to press this too far. If every religious notion or spectacle which presents itself in the dreaming state were to be regarded as an inspiration of the Spirit of God, the region of religious belief would be invaded by destroying hordes of caprice and confusion. But there is a plain rule which, if observed, will guard from such error: nothing of a religious nature occurring to us in dreams has any value if it be not in harmony with the Word of God. This rule will save us from anything like fanaticism. But, if an impression reaching us in dreams makes any truth or fact of God's Word more vivid and real, disposing us to act in accordance with it, then we are justified in believing that there may be in our dream or vision a leading of the Spirit.

¶ To the negro a dream is an *avant-courier* from to-morrow, a whisper out of eternity for the guidance of men. Farther East I came across a proof of this. Coming out of the grass, I met a band of solemn-looking men with a curious old-world look in their faces. Wonder of wonders, they were a 'dream embassy,' said they; had travelled a long way and were afoot on a kind of Missionary journey from one great chief to another, his friend and faithful ally of years. A 'dream embassy,' mark you, God having spoken to their chief in a great dream; and the solemnity of it all had so sunk into the monarch's soul that he sent off these Missionaries of his dream to warn his dear friend, a brother-king, of the ways of God with man. So serious a thing is this dream-telling that they have coined a special verb (*Lotolwela*), 'to expound a dream.' Not in the temper of mere expediency did I listen to their sacred story, the negro *tête-a-tête* with the Infinite, men on the march for many miles, their theme, God! God! God! Picture me there a dazed Missionary listening to these dream-tellers—listening and wondering, listening and wondering—as with uplifted hands they point skywards and paint it all so vividly. Telling me of the stately goings of God in their far-away marsh; how that He challenged their king as to his dignity; how that the king responded with his long array of titles; and how that the more he

vaunted before God the less did his strength become. Yet again and again did God so ask him who he was, and just as often did their king make this foolish boast of dignity—only to find his strength oozing out of his body. But just as in painting light is brought out by shade, so this king learned the secret of power from this very secret of weakness. For finally God said He would 'make an end,' and this word 'end' was the beginning of bliss. Said the monarch: 'King? no king am I, but a worthless slave. All kingship is Thine and all power!' Then it was the wondrous tide of power flowed back into his body: the weakling now a giant; the abject a strong man made strong out of weakness. Mere dream though it was, it has solemnly crystallised into dogma, and here am I a Missionary stumbling across these other 'dream' Missionaries in the grass. In our zeal for God's written record we are too apt to treat all this as a weird and doubtful business—mere misty dream. Forgetful of the fact that God's own Book it is that declares, 'in a dream . . . he openeth the ears of men.' Forgetful, likewise, that if England does not get these divine dreams it is because England, a land full of Bibles, does not need them.[1]

¶ Take another illustration nearer home. Miss Daphne Allen was regarded as a rather unusual prodigy when, eleven years ago, she astounded art circles by her talent for drawing. She was then a child of ten. Her flowers and fairies and angels were not merely exquisite as works of art, but were the more interesting because of the way the child told how they were produced. They were, she said, the result of dreams which came to her unbidden.

Miss Allen, who is now 21, has not lost her mysticism. If anything, it is deeper and more beautiful than ever. She is still drawing symbolic things, full of spiritual meaning. Recently Dean Inge, of St. Paul's, and Mrs. Inge leant the Deanery for an exhibition of about 60 of her works.

2. The second method in which God speaks is through *illness:*

[1] Dan Crawford, *Thinking Black*, 57f.

He is chastened also with pain upon his bed,
And with continual strife in his bones:
So that his life abhorreth bread,
And his soul dainty meat.
His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen;
And his bones that were not seen stick out.
Yea, his soul draweth near unto the pit,
And his life to the destroyers.

It would be difficult, in the whole compass of human literature, to find a more vivid description of illness. For instance, ver. 19 speaks of 'continual strife in his bones,' though the old version was even more picturesque, when it spoke of 'the multitude of his bones.' In good health we scarcely know that we have bones; or, at all events, we have no sense of the complexity of the osseous structure; because, hidden under its comfortable integument, it does its work unfelt and as a whole. But in rheumatic fever and other maladies this wholeness is broken; we are conscious of every bone in our body, for there is a pain in every one of them; so that we know what Job meant by 'the multitude of his bones.' In ver. 20 another feature of severe illness is given with equal realism: 'His life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat.' Everyone who can remember a prolonged and prostrating illness will recall this aversion to food. The very sight of it fills the soul with loathing; and, although kind hands may have done their very utmost to make a choice morsel look dainty and appetising, the patient begs that it may be taken out of his sight. In ver. 21 the aspect of the sick man is described at a later stage as, gaunt and deathlike, he raises himself up in bed, with sunken cheeks, hollow eyes, thin arms; or as, when he is not able for even this, he draws up his shrunken knees, so that they look as if they would actually pierce the coverlet. No wonder the next verse says:

Yea, his soul draweth near unto the pit,
And his life to the destroyers.

In those ancient days it was sometimes by bringing a man into this condition that God spoke to him; and here, at any rate, there is

nothing antiquated, for this is still a common way in which the Spirit of God deals with the spirit of man. To lay him down on a bed of trouble may be the only way in which God can get a man to think. Many are so involved in the rush and excitement of business that they have no time for reflection; and others are so engrossed in the pursuit of the gaieties and follies of the world that, though they have time enough for meditation, they have no taste for it. Is it not merciful if God lays such a one down on a bed of trouble? He is sequestered from company and forced to face his inner self, which he sees to be mean, squalid and unfurnished. Though he may have been growing rich in worldly goods, this has been at the expense of inner poverty. He sees all that he has been laboriously acquiring taking flight, whilst he is about to enter into the presence of God, to give in his account.

Or it may be in another form that the shadow of death appears in the home. Illness may fall upon one near and dear; death may carry off the pride of a man's heart and the light of his eyes; and, as he gazes into the pale kingdom of death and hears the mighty waters breaking on the shore of eternity, folly dies in him, and he turns round to estimate the prizes of life with sane and altered eyes. It is often in the vast silence which falls on the heart bereaved that the voice of God is heard. The body of one has to die that the soul of another may live; and thus on many a grave in the churchyard there may be said to bloom flowers of immortality.

¶ Death must always be a dreaded visitor to any house, and it is hard to forgive his robberies, but he leaves behind many peaceable fruits. For instance, a certain seriousness of thought and feeling that are not easily learned. People who are strong and busy and successful and glad—who have never been chastened in their hearts—are apt to take shallow and trifling views of life. They do not see clearly because of the glare of sunshine in the room, so they might pass a Crucifixion without notice. Life is but a pleasant day—a pastoral, with song and dancing. By and by one blind after another is drawn down, till the light grows grey and sombre, and the Christ upon His Cross looks out from the shadow. The deeps of life are opened with their solemnities, their realities, their tragedies. The character loses its light grace, its gay delight in the comedy of existence; but it gains instead an understanding of the inwardness of things and the responsibilities of the soul. . . . and Death is a very successful teacher of that faith we all long to possess; the conviction of the Unseen. We may play with the arguments against another life when our affections are neutral, and may even pretend that the case is not proven. Let one of our flesh and blood bid us good-bye and pass within the veil, and reason surrenders the place to love. A young child with Christ does more to illuminate the other world than all the books that ever have been written, and it has often come to pass that at the touch of this unseen hand hard and sceptical men have arisen and set their faces towards God, for the hope of seeing again a golden head on which the sun was ever shining.[1]

3. The third way in which the Spirit of God dealt in those ancient times with the spirit of man was through *testimony:*

If there be with him an angel,
An interpreter, one among a thousand,
To shew unto man what is right for him;
Then he is gracious unto him, and saith,
Deliver him from going down to the pit,
I have found a ransom.
His flesh shall be fresher than a child's;
He returneth to the days of his youth;
He prayeth unto God, and he is favourable unto him;
So that he seeth his face with joy:
And he restoreth unto man his righteousness.
He singeth before men, and saith,
I have sinned, and perverted that which was right,
And it profited me not:
He hath redeemed my soul from going into the pit,
And my life shall behold the light.

[1] J. Watson, *The Potter's Wheel*, 31.

If the first method is rare, and the second common, this is the most common; and it succeeds where others have failed. But, in the Revised Version, the reader is put entirely off the track by the translation, which makes the bearer of the testimony an 'angel.' It is no angel, unless it be the angel which dwells in every good man and woman. The translation of the Authorized Version is correct 'a messenger'; and what makes anyone such a messenger is that he has found the secret for himself. This is the inner compulsion which sends him to the assistance of those who are far from God. There must be in his heart a spark of that love which brought the Son of God down from heaven to seek and to save that which was lost.

An equally suggestive title borne by the bringer of the testimony is 'an interpreter.' Elsewhere in Scripture this name is given to the prophets; and to bear the testimony here intended is a truly prophetic function. But the reason for the use of the title here is that the two methods previously tried by God are supposed to have failed. This is why He finds it necessary to resort to another. Even the message of illness may altogether fail to enter the mind for which it is intended, until someone better acquainted than the patient with the ways of Providence appears on the scene and says, 'This is what your suffering means.'

To interpret thus, however, to those with whom the Spirit of God is dealing, the meaning of their experience is no common gift; on the contrary, he who possesses it is 'one among a thousand.' Those who try to carry God's message to sinners are few and scattered. Rare even among professing Christians are those who have any real passion for the salvation of the souls of men or put forth any kind of sympathetic effort on their behalf. Is the proportion greatly larger than one in a thousand? Of the thousands of people encountered by any of us on the journey of life, how many have seemed to be really concerned about our salvation or have taken any trouble for our awakening? If we can say that two or three have done so we have been more fortunate than the majority. Yet the testimony of man to man is the most effective means employed by the Spirit of God for doing His work in the human soul.

¶ There is probably no missioner in the world so popular as Gipsy Smith. Yet he confesses that but for a word spoken to him in Epping Forest when he was a little gipsy lad selling clothes pegs he would never have taken up Christian work. A gentleman placed his hand on the lad's curly head and said: 'The Lord make you a preacher of the gospel, my lad.' The speaker was Mr. Ira D. Sankey, the compiler of the famous hymn-book.

It will be remembered how the exquisite language of ver. 23 affected the mind of Bunyan, creating the Interpreter's House, which is nothing but the Church of the living God, as well as the portrait, so incomparably painted, of God's messenger, who was 'one among a thousand.' But there is pretty satisfactory evidence that this chapter arrested the attention of One far greater than Bunyan. Nothing about any Old Testament passage is so touching as evidence that it fell under the eye of Jesus and awoke reflections in His mind; and this is not wanting here. The third attempt to reach the soul is supposed to be effective; and its success is described in several forms. First:

> Then he is gracious unto him, and saith,
> Deliver him from going down into the pit,
> I have found a ransom.

But to every mind this will recall the saying of Jesus about Himself, that the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. Then the result is described again:

> His flesh shall be fresher than a child's;
> He returneth to the days of his youth.

But who could read this without remembering what was said by our Lord to Nicodemus about the new birth? Further on, the person with whom the dealing of the Spirit of God has been successful is made to say, as he looks back on his own past:

> I have sinned, and perverted that which is right,
> And it profited me not.

But, 'Father, I have sinned,' are the very words put by Jesus into the mouth of the returning Prodigal; and the two lines just quoted may well be the seed out of which the parable of the Prodigal Son was developed.

This poem within a poem is summed up in the words,

Lo, all these things doth God work,
Twice, yea thrice, with a man,
To bring back his soul from the pit,
That he may be enlightened with the light of the living.

The translation 'oftentimes' in the Authorized Version suggested the pleasing reflection that these workings of the Spirit of God on the spirit of man, so remarkably similar to those with which we are familiar ourselves, took place on a large scale even before the Advent; but the more correct translation, 'twice, yea thrice,' confirms the view we have taken that the poem describes not only the two ways of speaking which fail, but a third, which was effective; and the warmth and expansiveness with which the third is treated confirms the belief that this was the most usual and effective method of the Spirit of God in ancient, as it still is in modern times.[1]

The Gift of Quietness.

Job xxxiv. 29.—'When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?'

THERE are several different words employed in Scripture to indicate tranquillity of mind and heart. The word 'peace' is sometimes used. 'The peace of God.' 'The peace which passeth understanding.' 'My peace,' says Christ, 'I give unto you.' The word 'rest' is sometimes used. 'Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.' In our text another word is used: 'When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?' Each of these words, though it does not describe it, points us to an experience we can all understand. It may, indeed, be doubted whether any word can describe what is intended here. Words are at best but clumsy instruments to express feelings and emotions. But there are few of us unable to form a very distinct idea of what is meant by this quietness, although, it may be, we have never felt it.

1. Here is one toiling with gigantic and persistent effort at the tasks of life. He labours after a fair ideal, but he has not learned that a power beyond his own must enable him to reach it; and he can never satisfy himself, let him do as he will. Duty lifts itself away from him ever more and more in proportion as his perception becomes spiritual and true, and he cannot overtake it. Like the horizon, it recedes, and he begins to feel as though he must outrun time, and outreach or transcend space, before 'duty done' and he can really meet.

Let him at once begin to toil in another spirit. Let him go and stand humbly beside the great Worker who has fulfilled all righteousness: let him accept the salvation which that work brings, and let him take it as a pattern for his own. Let him say, 'Lord, let me serve Thee, and not abstract Deity—Thee and not myself,' and let him wait and see whether peace will not be his portion; whether quietness as deep as that of the deepest seas will not take possession of his breast—his toiling powers all touched and soothed into tranquillity by the peace of God, flowing from the ocean of Divine and Eternal rest.

Lord, temper with tranquillity
My manifold activity,
That I may do my work for Thee
In very great simplicity.[1]

2. There are those who are robbed of the quietness God gives, by a haunting sense of insecurity of tenure. The elements of their peace are not permanent; and while they last they are troubled by the fear of disastrous change. With such, the goodness of God would seem to be precarious, always requiring to be made out anew in relation to present fortunes—to be believed when they are happy, to be doubted when they are troubled. We

[1] J. Stalker.

[1] *In the House of My Pilgrimage*, 56.

have all to confess how little we possess our souls in peace, how much more we fear ourselves to be at the mercy of circumstances than we really are. How few walk in the filial faith of Christ, that in God there is no darkness at all, no cloud upon His love, no spark of unfatherly purpose towards us that could throw an undefined shadow on our spirits! How many of us live in apprehension of evils that never come! To how many periods of our lives can we look back that were overcast, through fear and want of trust—distrust of God, distrust of one another—knowing now that they might have been passed in almost radiant bliss, if we could have swept the unreal spectres from our thoughts! Notwithstanding the inevitable changefulness and insecurity of outward life, through what long tracts might the river of our being have borne us on full tides of peace, if we could have divested ourselves of Peter's fear that we were about to sink, that the waters would rise about us and overwhelm our souls! There are few who do not feel now in regard to past years that through want of faith they threw their own shadows on God's sunshine. If many of us were asked why in bygone days we did not take the quietness that God gave, seeing that no great calamity has come upon us, we could give no answer, except that the shadow of an unbelieving fear was upon our hearts.

Many a captive is held in this prison-house of fear: all the uncertainties of life, and the dread certainty of death, make him subject to bondage, and the bondage is dark and bitter. And is there no release? Where is the key of this dark house? Here it is: 'Perfect love casteth out fear.'

Let the fearful and the timid one see that 'God is love'—essentially and eternally—love to all, and therefore love to him; and that God has done and suffered all that love could suggest for the well-being of His creatures—and what a change will come hard and close upon this discovery! It will be borne in upon him, as if it were a new revelation, that God cares for him, with a real, a tender, an unwearying care; and that it is a poor and sad and even a sinful return that he is making to his heavenly Father to go bending under burdens he need not bear, and to be fretting about things which are not put supremely under his control; fearing disasters that will never come, and despairing of blessings which are already knocking at the door, and looking in through the windows. It is as if a new room, or a new dwelling-house, or a new world, were opened by an invisible key—which yet is visible enough if we look for it. It can be taken down even by a child if he will. It hangs among a good many others at the close of the sixth chapter of Matthew. It has opened many an earthly paradise. Here it is: 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' 'My heavenly Father knoweth?—and means to give me the things I do really need? Then let me be silent; let me be ashamed; and for the future let me live a more calm and trustful life.'

¶ George MacDonald was one in whom perfect love cast out fear. In his biography we read: One point in my father's character is very clear: he had no intimacy with Fear. . . . We shall see at the close of these Manchester days with what equanimity he looked death in the face; and I remember how some twelve years later he visited a friend struck down with smallpox and so maniacal that no one else could control him. It was his personal embodiment of the sixth beatitude that made him not only fearless of spiritual and physical danger but regardless of any accusation of improvidence which Society, that 'all-pervading, ill-odoured phantom,' that 'rag-stuffed idol,' could bring against him. To keep the mind serene in expectancy of death, to risk contagion of a horrible disease for Love's sake, to wait upon God for bread, is to leave all for the Truth: to consider first a piece of ground, or a five-yoke of oxen, or a wife as apologies for fear, was never his way. He knew he could fill at once any one of these pastorless chapels if it had been right to accept them. But it was not. Though he could not see where food and clothing for wife and children were to come from, he would not even for them accept the stones in the wilderness as bread.[1]

[1] G. MacDonald, *George MacDonald and His Wife*, 200.

On God's Behalf.

Job xxxvi. 2.—'Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee, for I have yet somewhat to say on God's behalf.'

Some have thought that the character of Elihu was introduced into the Book of Job at a later time to clear up an enigma. At any rate, his part is like that of the wise chorus in the Grecian tragedy; or like that of a judge balancing an argument. Gently, calmly, without vehemence, without anger, he turns the attention of the patriarch from himself and his sufferings to the greatness and wisdom of God. 'I will answer thee, in this thou art not just; for God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.' And then he rises into a strain higher and higher. He gives a comparison of the good and the evil in this life, and begins to speak in clearer and clearer words of God in creation. And now there came a final confirmation of what Elihu had said. Whilst he yet spoke the earth trembled and was moved out of its place. There was a roar of thunder; out of the south came a whirlwind, and out of the whirlwind the Eternal said: 'Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?' Before that display of the Divine power the proud spirit of the ancient patriarch was bowed down, and he said: 'I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. . . . I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'

1. The wisdom put into the mouth of Elihu when the three friends had failed reminds us that there are times when traditional authority must give way to truth, when he who is young may instruct those who are aged, when out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God has ordained that very strength which the world most needs. That deference to age and authority on which the three friends insisted is, indeed, a general rule of both sacred and common life, and unless it were so experience could never be formed. Society would always be dissolving, and teaching and acting would lose that stability which is the only guarantee of progress, as well as of permanence.

But, notwithstanding, the doctrine shadowed forth in the appearance of Elihu is this: that each generation must learn not only from that which has gone before it, but from that which is coming after it. The rising generation has some truths which the older generation may have failed to apprehend. Even a child can instruct its elders. Elihu was young, and the three friends were old; yet to him was entrusted the message pointing to the true solution of the difficulty that perplexed them all. It was, indeed, no new truth which he put before them; but for that very reason there was need that the quick and lively eye of youth should have the right to receive it, and apply it in a new aspect. To each generation God entrusts certain truths to carry out wisely and usefully. So again and again new life has been breathed into expiring systems, new vigour into decaying nations, new meanings into ancient creeds, and there have been new applications of most venerable truths. Every fresh generation has something to tell us. Every young man ought to bear his part in endeavouring to purify and elevate his city, his country, and mankind.

¶ In his Rectorial Address at St. Andrews Sir James Barrie said to the young men and women of the University: 'War and other happenings have shown you that age is not necessarily another name for sapience: that our avoidance of frankness in life and in the arts is often, but not so often as you think, a cowardly way of shirking unpalatable truths, and that you have taken us off our pedestals because we look more natural on the ground. You who are at the rash age even accuse your elders, sometimes not without justification, of being more rash than yourselves. "If Youth but only knew," we used to teach you to sing; but now, just because Youth has been to the war, it wants to change the next line into "If Age had only to do." In so far as this attitude of yours is merely passive, sullen, negative, as it mainly is, despairing of our capacity and anticipating a future of gloom, it is no game

for man or woman. It is certainly the opposite of that for which I plead. Do not stand aloof, despising, disbelieving, but come in and help —insist on coming in and helping.'[1]

2. We are reminded that there are problems beyond the power of man to exhaust, and that in the certainty of that uncertainty it is our privilege to rest. The human mind, it may be well said, may repose as calmly before a confessed and incontrovertible difficulty as before a confessed and discovered truth. The error of Job and his friends was that they thought to measure the counsels of God, Job complaining that because he was righteous he ought not to be afflicted. Elihu, on the other hand, in the face of the whirlwind, declared, the Almighty 'is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice. He will not afflict.' He will not afflict without need, and in that power and justice and judgment, no less than in His mercy and love, let us place our absolute confidence. God, as the old proverb says, never smites with both hands at once. With one He strikes to afflict, but the other is uplifted to bless, to heal, and to purify. We may rest assured that His Divine mind has a purpose, even though we do not see it.

¶ Let me repeat what I once heard from the lips of a rough seafaring man, one of the few survivors of a great shipwreck which took place some years ago in the Bay of Biscay. As soon as those who had escaped from the sinking vessel found themselves in the small boat in which they had taken refuge, in the midst of the raging sea, they found their chief danger came not from the solid, massive sweep of waters, but from the angry, breaking waves which from time to time descended upon them, and against which every eye and hand had to watch with unabated attention. As the shades of evening drew on (so the survivor told me) their hearts sank at the thought that in the darkness of the night it would be impossible to see those insidious breakers, and that sooner or later they would be caught and engulfed by them. But with the darkness there came a corresponding safety. Every one of those dangerous waves, as it rolled forward toward them, was crested with a phosphorescent light, which showed its coming far off, and enabled the seamen to guard against it as carefully as if they had been in the full light of day. The spirits of the little crew revived, and those who from time to time—the cowards and desperadoes among them—were for turning back to the ship were guided by those coruscations through the night, and in the early dawn they caught view of a distant vessel, by which they were at last saved.[1]

[1] J. M. Barrie, *Courage*, 15.

The Greatness and Goodness of God.

Job xxxvi. 5.—'Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any.'

1. The most splendid imagery in the Book of Job is employed in the setting forth of the power of God—the pillars of heaven tremble at His reproof; His lightning goeth forth, and after it a voice roareth; He spreadeth out the sky; He shutteth up the sea with doors, and layeth the foundations of the earth; the stars in their courses follow the guidance of His hand; He saith to the rain and to the snow, 'Be thou upon earth.' When by these fast-succeeding pictures of the Divine glory our thoughts have been profoundly stirred, and when we think we have reached—as the Psalmist says—'an end of all perfection,' we are quietly reminded that we are but looking at the beginning of the revelation, the outward skirts of the glory. 'Lo, these are parts of his ways,' cries Job; 'but how little a portion is heard of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?' Such thoughts, unsoftened or unrelieved, are crushing to human weakness. The terrible sense of overwhelming power may come upon a man's soul even in the midst of his devotion, and force from his lips the bitter cry, 'Think no scorn of me, lest I be like unto them that go down to the pit. Despise not the work of thine own hands.'

¶ We are repelled by the thought of a Being of vast power using that power for no benefi-

[1] A. P. Stanley.

cent purpose, but in profound security of its possession despising the weakness of those who cannot menace it. Tint the picture as you please, you will not alter the main effect. Tone it delicately—and you see the gods of Epicurus in their golden houses, smiling at the cry that comes up from the struggling world below them. Paint it in coarse and lurid colours—and you have Caliban's conception of Setebos, 'altogether such an one as himself'; a being of mere reckless caprice. This is Caliban's idea of the use of power:—

'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
That march now from the mountains to the sea;
Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
Loving not, hating not, but just choosing so.'

Or, if you desire to see a still more definite combination of power with contemptuousness, seek it among the ruins and the rock-tombs of Egypt, and note the quiet scorn expressed in the features of gods and kings. The soul of the worshipper must have sunk within him, as he looked in the face of the deity whose favour he sought, or whose vengeance he deprecated. Carved across the powerful breast and shoulders he would see the sceptre and the flail—emblems of sovereignty and punishment; and on the supercilious brow and tranquil lips a bland look of ineffable indifference, that regarded with equal calmness the joy or the agony of his votary. Or look at that royal tomb. There is a procession of captives rank after rank, with the halter round their necks. In the midst stands the gigantic form of a Rameses, sword in hand, serene and unruffled, while the poor victims pass along to slavery or death. Such a petty tragedy as this could never break his contemptuous calm! This picture is infinitely more terrible than the most violent presentation of fury or malevolence. Malevolence admits the importance of its foes; their overthrow is worth the trouble of effort and the struggle of scheme and intrigue. But here is the exhibition of mere power, not startled from its even balance by the sense of formidable antagonism, or thawed from its icy indifference by one soft breath of mercy or compassion. It is indeed a mightiness that despiseth.[1]

2. We cannot face the thought of power and majesty unless it is tempered by the assurance of kindness and graciousness. And so, when St. Paul sought for words wherewith to characterize the law and the commandment of God, he was obliged to group his epithets together. No one word was broad enough to express their manifold qualities. 'The law is holy,' he writes, 'and the commandment holy, and just, and good.' The first of his three epithets is meant to describe the awful sanctity of the Divine law. It was in this shape that it was announced to Israel, as they lay encamped before Sinai. Every circumstance that attended its promulgation was superhuman and terrifying—the thick darkness, the thunder-peal, and the voice of words which forced Moses to confess, 'I exceedingly fear and quake.' The very holiness of the law kept men at a distance. But it was also 'just.' Here it came into immediate contact with human life, measuring with a righteous measure and judging with strict judgment; weighing the result of men's lives against the chances and opportunities that had been presented to them, and leaving the decision to be ratified by the echo of conscience. Yet both these aspects of the Divine law appal us. Our mortal frailty sinks at the sight of its holiness: our sense of sinfulness finds little comfort in the contemplation of its justice. But, says the Apostle, 'the commandment is good.' There is a sense of relief in this word: it has a sound of sympathy. We have left the beetling crags of Sinai for the homes of men. We seem to be dealing no longer with a system, but with a person, in whose breast a human heart is beating. 'The commandment is good': it blends the exercise of mercy with that of justice: it is full of consideration: it is instinct with charity: it 'can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.' The smallest, the weakest, the most fearful are drawn to it, because it is 'good.' For this goodness is very tender. It keenly appreciates the rights of the least, as well as

[1] W. W. Merry.

of the greatest. Nothing is too unimportant for its kindly eye; nothing so humble as to be beneath the help of its gracious care. Herein is the glory of God's law, and of every law that is modelled upon the Divine pattern. It is very 'mighty,' but it 'despiseth not any.'

This union is regarded throughout the Bible as the sure ground for man's humility and man's hope. We hear the announcement of it again and again in the prophetic books, while it sounds in a full harmony in the Gospels. When Christ was revealed as 'the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person,' He taught us to base the very possibility of all our prayer on this sense of God's power and goodness. 'After this manner therefore pray ye, "Our Father which art in heaven" '—as though He would say, 'Think of Him as Maker and Lord of all, dwelling in the light which no one can approach unto: and yet, come to His throne, as children come to their father.'

Who fathoms the Eternal Thought?
  Who talks of scheme and plan?
The Lord is God! He needeth not
  The poor device of man.

I walk with bare, hushed feet the ground,
  Ye tread with boldness shod;
I dare not fix with mete and bound
  The love and power of God.

Ye praise His justice; even such
  His pitying love I deem:
Ye seek a king; I fain would touch
  The robe that hath no seam.[1]

Divine Reserve,

Job xxxvi. 9.—'He holdeth back the face of his throne.'

Reserve is not merely a human quality: there is a sense in which we may apply the word to God. There is much that He does not reveal to us: 'He holdeth back the face of his throne.'

1. *God does not reveal Himself in entirety.*—The man who thinks that there is nothing in the created universe but what he himself has been able to experience is so pitifully blind that it seems hardly worth his while to be alive at all. The bulk of what a great scholar knows seems to the knowledge of one of his students as Loch Lomond to a fire-bucket; but his knowledge to the collective knowledge of all mankind is like Loch Lomond to the whole wide sea. That, in its turn, is to the things we know that we know nothing about much as the little homely ball of the earth is to the terrible distance of the solar system; while even the sum of the things about which we know enough to know that we know nothing shrinks in the infinity of God as the swing of the planets shrinks and is lost in the infinity of the starry universe.

2. *God does not reveal to us more than we can bear.*—There is nothing artificial about our ignorance; facts are not withheld from us, any more than a picture, a statue, or an oratorio is kept from the cognizance of an animal—everything lies before it, ready to be seen or heard—only the perception is lacking. In the divinest creation of man such creatures see absolutely nothing; nothing can they appreciate of the spirit, the idea, the inspiration, incarnate in a work of genius. And even so it must be with the most enlightened man, confronted with the creations of God. How little of the universe we know: only that part revealed by our senses, or deduced by inference. That God can give when His time comes is, granting His existence at all, a self-evident proposition. The limitation is merely our own power to receive. If our power were greater we could receive more, as by the use of delicate instruments we can receive perceptions of light-rays above and below those of the spectrum, which are all that most of us—and more than some of us—can perceive with the eye.

¶ We recognise a gradual Revelation. Gradual, not for the sake of delay or secrecy, but because of the limitation of human faculties. Revelation is as rapid as the race can receive it. There is no artificial withholding of information, but every expression must necessarily be in terms of what can be

[1] J. G. Whittier.

understood. For instance—our most recondite modern conception of the physical Universe is expressible in terms of Ether and Motion. Suppose that a statement in such terms—appropriate to Lord Kelvin, let us say—had been made to nomad tribes wandering like Arabs in the desert, while they were going through the effort to found a civilised race among barbarous nations. What mockery it would have been! Would it even have been truth? No, not to them; something much more human was necessary.[1]

¶ Every revelation of God to us is after all a *limitation of Himself*—a closing in of the face of His throne, so that it may be brought within the angle of our vision. This limitation is the condition of all true teaching. A senior wrangler of Cambridge teaches a class of boys how to do a simple sum in proportion, or he may cross-examine them in the multiplication table. He makes no mention of trigonometry, conic sections, or differential calculus. What is he doing by this strange reserve? He is 'keeping back the face of his throne,' but in so doing, too, he is teaching the boys. Had he repeated the formulæ of the higher mathematics, instead of confining himself to the scope of his pupils' comprehension, he would have been exposing the face of his throne, but he would have taught no one. This is but an imperfect illustration of the graciousness of God's reserve in manifesting the resources of His power and majesty. He has many things to say unto us, but we cannot bear them now.[2]

3. *God's gradual revelation is a magnificent promise.*—We know in part; but as yet we do not know what we may know, only that it will be infinitely greater than we know now. From the progressive revelation that has separated one of the great thinkers of our day from the first ape-like brute who, seeing farther than his fellows, killed his prey with a sharp stone instead of his naked strength, we can guess something of what may be. We can be very sure that *we* are not at the top of life—that verily we are not the people, and wisdom will not die with us.

Whatever is given, there is more in reserve. Behind the abundance bestowed, there is a greater in store. That which is revealed is but the shadow of that which is to come. The present is always imperfect without the future, as the past was, lacking the present. Something must be withheld from Abraham which shall be granted to David, and that which Isaiah sees in prophecy only is the living reality of Peter's life and Paul's. God's resources are infinite, and man is made the recipient of his fullness only according to his slow ability to receive. He is led through God's fields of beauty, wealth, and blessing, step by step; and little by little are their richness and glory unfolded before his eyes. This universe is too great a wonder to be flashed all at once upon his vision. Life is too profound an experience to be poured hastily into his weak heart. The Divine Spirit is too subtle and too pervasive to be hurriedly revealed. Hence the condition is inevitable that God must fit the gift to the hand that takes it, the light to the eyes that see. He must keep back the inheritance till the heir is of age. The preparation of the physical world, the education of the human race, involves, in the very nature of the case, the withholding of the finer forces and resources until the beings have come who can use them, the minds that can comprehend them. Our Maker is forever withholding. Yet He withholds to-day only that He may give to-morrow. He bestows as fast as we are capable of receiving. After all that He has given, there is boundless store remaining. And so the future promises revelations richer than the past has conferred; the ages that lie before will witness the same bestowments which have made us rich. As fast as we are ready or have need, the abundance of the heavenly treasures will be disclosed, and all God's glory forever made to pass before our eyes.

> Think thou and act; to-morrow thou shalt die,
> Outstretched in the sun's warmth upon the shore;

[1] Sir Oliver Lodge, *Reason and Belief*, 42.
[2] D. Davies, *Talks with Men, Women, and Children*, 229.

Thou say'st: 'Man's measured path is all
gone o'er:
Up all his years, steeply, with strain and
sigh,
Man clomb until he touched the truth; and
I,
Even I, am he whom it was destined for.'
How should this be? Art thou then so
much more
Than they who sowed, that thou shouldst
reap thereby?

Nay, come up hither. From this wave-
washed mound
Unto the furthest flood-brim look with me;
Then reach on with thy thought till it be
drown'd.
Miles and miles distant though the last
line be,
And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues
beyond—
Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there
is more sea.[1]

4. *The promise in God's gradual revelation is a revealing of His love.*—If God has thus cast aside for us veil after veil that hinders our sight of Him, each new light giving us fresh power to bear the next, what else can that mean than that he has chosen us, loved us (for to whom else do we show ourselves but to those we love?) and means for us—what? We dare not more than recognize that the last question exists. The other we must face, and it needs courage. To be chosen, loved, by one human being is an experience at once greatly exalting and profoundly humbling; but to be chosen and loved by God? Truly, though He have many things to say unto us we cannot bear more now. We can only say, 'Behold the servants of the Lord: be it unto us according to His word.'

O love, surpassing thought,
So bright, so grand, so clear, so true, so
glorious;
Love infinite, love tender, love unsought,
Love changeless, love rejoicing, love
victorious!
And this great love for us in boundless store;
God's everlasting love! What would we
more?[1]

[1] Frances Ridley Havergal.

REVERENCE.

Job xxxvi. 26.—'Behold, God is great, and we know him not.'

THESE words were spoken by Elihu, who, having listened to the speeches of Job and his friends, feels that much has been said foolishly, and much presumptuously. The speakers seem to him to have forgotten the greatness of God and the ignorance of man. They have been blind to the mystery of things. They have assumed a familiar knowledge of the Divine Providence. They have spoken with assurance where they should have bowed with reverence. They have presumed to make the human mind the measure of the eternal, and to mark off on their little chart all the ways of God. Therefore Elihu breaks forth with this indignant reminder of God's greatness and man's ignorance. 'Behold, God is great, and we know him not.' It is a noble utterance, and much to be pondered by all who seek to penetrate the mystery, and solve the problems, of life. It may fitly introduce to us the subject of Reverence.

I.

THE LOSS OF REVERENCE.

It will generally be conceded that a marked feature of our time is a lamentable loss of reverence. 'One is haunted with the conviction that if in our day we have gained joy and charity, we have lost in devoutness and humility, and that we have almost bidden goodbye to reverence.'[1] The evidences of this lie patent on every hand. To multitudes the Word of God is no longer a lamp unto their

[1] J. Watson, *The Homely Virtues*, 126.

feet and a light unto their path, but is a neglected and unfamiliar book. The house of God, built by the sacrifices and consecrated by the prayers of the fathers, is of no account to their children. The day of rest which God has given to men, when once a week at least they may have quietness wherein to examine their souls and bring them into touch with the things which are unseen, is being crowded with business and pleasure. The head of the household no longer builds his altar unto God, and gathers his family round it as they journey through this world to that which is to come. In how few modern homes could one expect to find such a scene as Burns has immortalized in *The Cottar's Saturday Night.*

The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-bible, ance his father's pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide—
He wales a portion with judicious care,
And 'Let us worship God!' he says with solemn air.

. . . . . .

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How Abram was the friend of God on high.

. . . . . .

Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King
The saint, the father, and the husband prays.

The loss of this is not without its baneful influence upon the morals and daily life of the people. As reverence decays and the solemn restraints of religion fail, a lower view is taken of the mystery of marriage, and fewer people seek the blessing of God upon that sacred act, which they come to regard as nothing but a civil contract. The bonds of filial piety are loosed, so that parents cease to exercise their authority as the vicegerents of God, and children cease to render that obedience which is one of the beauties of youth.

Perhaps too much stress should not be laid on these symptoms, for the loss of reverence is an old complaint which is heard in successive generations. Many to-day would regard the mid-Victorian period as an age when reverence bordered on superstition, yet we find a writer of that time remarking, 'It is common to hear it said now that this is peculiarly an age when reverence is rare. People say with lamenting, "Nowadays nothing seems sacred." '[1] And well nigh three centuries ago Laud complains, 'It is called superstition nowadays for any man to come with more reverence into a church, than a tinker and his dog into an ale-house.'[2]

It is confessedly not easy to see our own generation in its true perspective, yet, when all due allowance is made, it cannot but be recognized that there is a wide-spread spirit of irreverence abroad to-day, amounting in many cases to an utter disregard and contempt for all things noble and venerable. Ruskin has an impressive analysis of the origin and growth of this spirit in the political realm—and his words, fifty years after they were written, sound prophetic to-day. The common people, he says, after centuries of misgovernment by foolish and selfish rulers, have lost the reverence they once had for the higher powers. 'But that is the least part of the mischief. The deadly part of it is, that the lower orders have lost their habit, and at last their faculty, of respect;—lost the very capability of reverence, which is the most precious part of the human soul. . . . Now we have created in Europe a vast populace, which has lost even the power and conception of reverence;—which exists only in the worship of itself—which can neither see anything beautiful around it, nor conceive anything virtuous above it; which has, towards all goodness and greatness, no other feelings than those of the lowest creatures—fear, hatred, or hunger; a populace which has sunk below your appeal in their nature, as it has risen beyond your power in their multitude;—whom you can now no more charm than you can the adder, nor discipline, than you can the summer fly.'[3]

[1] A. Sidgwick, *School Homilies*, i. 51.
[2] J. Morley, *Oliver Cromwell*, 38.
[3] Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive*, iv. § 137.

In the measure in which this is true it marks an irreparable loss. No greater misfortune could befall than the loss of the faculty of reverence. For reverence lies at the root of all right living; it is the principle of all order and restraint. 'Reverence is one of the sure foundations of character, for without it one may indeed have many glittering and superficial traits of cleverness and ingenuity, of bright emotion and restless energy, but he cannot have illumination of conscience, dignity of soul, sincerity of mind, and the highest purity of life. Nor is it likely that one can obtain the gracious qualities of sympathy, charity, and sacrifice. It is only as the soul is bowed before the things which are lovely that it will carry itself both bravely and tenderly.'[1]

The greatest of men have ever been the most reverent, the most conscious of their own limitations, of their own ignorance in face of the infinite mystery of things, of their own weakness and imperfection, the most willing also to look above themselves for illumination and guidance and help. Tennyson, of whom it was said that 'there was a deep reverence in him for the Unseen, the Undiscovered, the as yet Unrevealed,'[2] writes in one of his letters, 'What matters it how much man knows and does if he keep not a reverential looking upward? He is only the subtlest beast in the field.[3] Even so it is. The soul that has lost reverence has lost contact with a higher world, is poor, degraded and unblest. Not only so but the loss of reverence shakes the very foundations of the social order. As Gladstone said, 'Without a great stock of reverence, mankind, as I believe, will go to the bad.'[4] If we do not learn when young the habit of respect, to honour our father and mother, to obey those set over us without questioning or grudging, to give precedence to age, both in our speaking and in our doing, to admit the sacred claim of suffering and affliction, and to bow ourselves before the highest rank on earth, the splendour of moral goodness, then for us no perfection of soul will ever be possible. For us there will likely be in the future many a squalid defeat, and perhaps some irrevocable moral disaster. The irreverence of youth grows into the profanity and rebellion of later years, and is the parent of anarchy, both in the family and in the State.

Here it may be useful to define reverence, and especially to distinguish carefully between false reverence and true. The distinction lies in this: false and servile reverence is the child of mystery and fear, true reverence is the child of mystery and love.

II.

SERVILE REVERENCE.

This is really another name for superstition, which is often confused with reverence. It is, as has been said, the child of mystery and fear. Primitive man found himself surrounded with mystery. He was like a child in the dark, quivering with fear because at any moment some awful power might grip him fast. The unknown seemed to be peopled with dreadful presences, whose mysterious movements could be heard in the sighing of the wind and the rustling of the leaves. Shadowy terrors were on every side, and forces against which no human arm or weapon could avail. And so through fear man was driven to worship and to desperate rites of sacrifice.

This is held by some to be the origin of religion. Reverence, in other words, takes its rise in a servile dread of the supernatural. And the hope is cherished that the advance of science will in due time emancipate the human mind from this servile dread. As the light of knowledge penetrates deeper into the mystery of life the awful encompassing darkness will be rolled back and the shadowy spectres of the mind be laid. And so at length, such is the hope, out of the dark night of mystery and fear which has so long oppressed his spirit, man will emerge into the broad and glorious day of knowledge and of mastery.

To those who regard the supernatural with dread this may seem a consummation devoutly to be desired, a deliverance from servile bondage, a glorious assertion of our inherent man-

[1] J. Watson, *The Homely Virtues*, 132.
[2] *Tennyson and his Friends*, 221.
[3] A. C. Benson, *Tennyson*, 112.
[4] W. E. Gladstone, *Letters on Church and Religion*, ii. 327.

hood. But the hope is vain. The advance of science has swept away many superstitions, and doubtless will sweep away many more, but true reverence, and the need of reverence, will remain. All our scientific knowledge is but as a spot of light in the midst of the illimitable dark, and ever as the radius of human knowledge widens the overhanging arc of encompassing darkness grows more vast and awful. Science shows no sign of reaching the end of its task, and comes no nearer penetrating the ultimate mystery of things. Science looks out upon the vastness of the universe, and peers into the minuteness of its structure, but finds everywhere an unfathomable depth. Kant declared that the spectacle of the starry sky filled his soul with a holy reverence and an ever growing wonder. Since his day astronomy, so far from diminishing, has infinitely increased the wonder. New worlds in myriads have swum into our ken, so that the astronomer, in a vain attempt to express illimitable vastness, is driven to violate language and speak of *Universes*. The mind sinks beneath the contemplation of such wonders. What can we say of them but just what the Psalmist said so long ago: 'Great is the Lord, and his greatness is unsearchable'?

The mystery of things will always envelop us, and can in no wise be shaken off. There will also remain awful possibilities in human destiny, possibilities of achievement or of disaster, reaching out far beyond our ken. It will therefore never cease to be necessary for man to confess his ignorance and to walk with careful step and upward look along the appointed way of life.

Does this prospect seem depressing? Is it a hateful reminder of man's impotence? Does it mean that man is chained, Prometheus-like, to a rock, that he is in the grip of an iron hand from which there is no escape? To the proud and rebellious it may indeed seem so, and theirs is a dreadful and pitiful condition. To rage and say, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us,' and to feel that He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision'—such impotence must be maddening. But, thank God, there is a better way; for when the heart of the mystery is laid bare we are taught to love and not to fear, and this is true reverence.

III.

TRUE REVERENCE.

True reverence, as has been said, is the child of mystery and love. For the Christian, as for others, the mystery of life remains. Even St. Paul was fain to confess that 'now we see through a glass darkly.' And again he said, 'If any man thinks that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.' This is most literally and universally true. No one of us knows anything, even the simplest thing, to its roots. Of this fact Tennyson gives a striking reminder:

> Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies,
> I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower—but *if* I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.

Many Christians stand much in need of this reminder. They plume themselves on being 'bright and happy believers,' and seem never to be troubled by any sense of the mystery of things. They speak of God in the most familiar terms, His 'plan of salvation' they have at their finger ends, and the eternal destiny of mankind is an open book to them. All this, of course, comes not from the clearness of their faith, but from the shallowness of their minds. They are walking in the footsteps of Job's friends, and have need to take to heart the words of Elihu, 'Behold, God is great, and we know him not.'

Yes, even for the Christian, as for others, the mystery of life remains. But the vital point is this. The Christian knows that at the heart of the mystery there is love. As on that never-to-be-forgotten night at Bethlehem, when the shepherds were abiding in the field keeping watch over their flocks, and suddenly the darkness was drowned beneath a shower of light and angel voices were heard singing of peace and goodwill to men, so out of the unseen there has come to us a revela-

tion of grace and truth, assuring us that 'the All-Great is the All-Loving too.'

So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
And thou must love me who have died for thee'![1]

Surely it is manifest that this revelation, when received into the mind and heart, entirely alters a man's attitude towards the unseen. Amid all the mystery there is a *glow* at the heart of things, where before there was an awful gloom. And it is the contemplation of this that awakens true reverence in the human soul. It is the goodness and love of God that make the deepest call upon our reverence. To bow in worship before power, and power alone, even though that power may be set on the throne of a universe, can never exalt the soul of man. It is not the vision of material greatness that men need, it is the vision of moral grandeur. And when that vision is presented in the person and work of Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Saviour, reverence springs up in response. It springs, not so much from a sense of the infinite power of God, but from the mystery of His love.

In this reverence there is a wonderful union of the love and the fear of God. 'Perfect love casts out fear, but deepens and intensifies reverence.'[2] The Christian fear of God is a very different thing from the natural, slavish, tormenting fear which it displaces. It is a holy fear begotten in hearts renewed and reconciled to God. It resembles the fear of a loving child who would not in anything offend his parents. It is the fear of grieving the Spirit, and incurring the displeasure of a God of love. 'To fear God and to love Him with the whole heart and soul are feelings indissolubly connected.'[3] Reverent fear is consistent with intense delight in God; as it is written, 'Happy is the man that feareth alway.' The profoundest reverence is compatible with the most trusting confidence. God's servants are 'devoted to his fear.'

Always at the heart of religion there must be this reverence. 'Among the children of God,' says Ruskin, 'there is always that fearful and bowed apprehension of His majesty, and that sacred dread of all offence to Him, which is called the fear of God.' It is an abiding characteristic of the believer's life. He never ceases to be penetrated by a subduing sense of religious awe, to be moved by a holy dread of wounding the love of God. Every step in holiness is measured by the increase in this fear, and the best men are the most full of it. 'Faith,' says John Owen, 'keeps the soul at a holy distance from these infinite depths of divine wisdom, where it profits more by reverence and holy fear than any can do by their utmost attempt to draw nigh to that inaccessible light wherein these glories of the divine nature do dwell.'[1]

IV.

THE CULTURE OF REVERENCE.

The reverent spirit needs to be carefully cultivated, for it may easily wither up and completely die. Darwin had originally, he said, 'a bump of reverence developed enough for ten priests,' and yet ere the end he had lost his sense of the unseen, and to feelings of reverence he confessed he was 'like a man who had become colour blind.'

(1) The culture of reverence must begin in the heart. Without the reverent spirit all our decorous observance of outward forms and ceremonies is of no avail. It is the merest superstition, and a pernicious substitute for spiritual worship. It is this that has roused the wrath of the iconoclast. 'I say superstition has no religious element in it at all. . . . And a man who walks into a church with his hat on his head, breaks images remorselessly to pieces, tosses consecrated bread out of the window, or treads it under foot, and yet prostrates his heart to goodness and nobleness, . . . is the man in whom awe and reverence have their right places, though foolish

[1] Browning.
[2] J. Strachan, *Hebrew Ideals*, i. 122.
[3] Schultz.

[1] *The Golden Book of John Owen*, 226.

people would call him irreverent.'[1] This, of course, may be very true in exceptional circumstances, and it is a useful reminder, to all who incline to set great store by forms and ceremonies, that reverence is first of all a thing of the heart. The bowing of the head before God is nothing without the inward prostration of the spirit. Yet there is the other side. When a preacher says that 'in speaking of reverence we can leave out of our sight the outward form and concentrate all our thought on the inward disposition,' he is falling into the opposite error. For the observance of the outward form is fitted to have a powerful influence upon the inward disposition. It is hardly going beyond the truth to say that the outward reacts upon the inward hardly less powerfully than the inward acts upon the outward.

(2) Reverence, therefore, must seek some fitting outward forms through which to express itself, and in expressing itself to grow strong. The truly reverent soul will find its natural expression in a reverent demeanour, and will feel a natural repulsion to all that savours of irreverence. His biographer says of Francis Paget, 'The outward tokens of his constant reverence one can recall. For all that seemed to betray irreverence in others jarred sharply on him; a noisy, self-asserting choir, or a fussy beadle, tried his tolerance; and if a clergyman gabbled or curtailed the prayers he would wonder whether there were no five minutes in the day that the man used worse than he might have used them in saying the service as it should be said. I never heard him tell a story or a joke that came near making fun of sacred words.'[2]

A reverent handling of God's Word, a reverent observance of God's holy day, a reverent demeanour in God's house, a reverent attitude in prayer—all these are the natural expressions of a reverent spirit, and by means of them that spirit is nourished and sustained. It has been finely said that reverence is due, not merely to all that is Divine, but to all 'that has touched the Divine.' This is true, and it has a very wide, an almost universal application. For on every hand we encounter something that has touched the Divine. All Nature is the handiwork of God; and the reverent soul will delight to trace in it the stamp of the Divine. 'All true lovers of natural beauty hold it in reverence so deep, that they would as soon think of climbing the pillars of the choir of Beauvais for a gymnastic exercise, as of making a playground of Alpine snow.'[1]

But of all that has 'touched the Divine' nothing claims our reverence so much as human life itself. Man was made in the very image of God and his body is fitted to be the temple of the Holy Ghost. Human nature, therefore, in every form is to be had in reverence. 'This is a lesson which the Christian world has learned only very imperfectly as yet. It has not reached the conviction of the absolute sanctity of human life. But in so far as we live near to Jesus Christ conviction will be ours. Of all acts of desecration we shall reckon the most heinous to be that which mars the beauty of the lives of men by defacing the image of God in them. The temple which we shall guard the most jealously will be the temple of God in human lives. For Christ has taught us the priceless worth of every soul in the sight of God, and that lesson carries with it a message of reverence for every soul in the sight of men.'[2]

(3) The finest school for the culture of reverence is the school of Christ. All these things are best learned of Him. As we set His holy example in our eye we mark His veneration for God's handiwork in Nature, His exquisite feeling for the glory of the lilies of the field, His tenderness for the falling sparrow. We note how reverent was His approach to human nature and how profound His sense of its infinite value, be it never so degraded and lost. We are impressed, as were the first disciples, with His zeal for the house of God, His love for God's Word, His reverent handling of all holy things. Above all, in His intercourse with His Father in heaven how perfect is the union of reverence with filial trust. Father and Son are one in

[1] *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, 99.
[2] *Francis Paget*, 314.

[1] Ruskin, Preface to *Sesame and Lilies*, § 6.
[2] S. M. Berry, *Graces of the Christian Character*, 69.

love, yet the solemn word of address upon His lips is 'Holy Father.'

He it is who says to us, 'Learn of me.' He it is who can teach us to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. He it is who can lead us into the secret place of the Most High, where angels veil their faces. He can cast out of our minds every superstitious fear of the unseen, and fill us with all peace and joy through believing, so that, as we stand face to face with the mystery of life, we hear a reassuring voice which says, 'Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

J. H. Morrison.

God's Tabernacle.

Job xxxvi. 29.—'Can any understand the noise of his tabernacle?'

In mythology we are told of a very wonderful building somewhere betwixt heaven and earth. The walls are of resounding brass. A thousand entries and windows are concealed from human sight by glorious foliage. There are no doors to shut, so they stand open night and day. Through the many openings all sounds of earth and every word that is spoken enter, and the discord roars every way, then passes out through the apertures by which they entered, ascending to Olympus as entrancing harmony, well pleasing to the gods.

What a pity this ancient fantasy is not a present-day reality! Ah, but this extraordinary building *is* a reality, and we find it described in even greater detail in the Word of God. What is more, we discover that its location is not so remote as the ancients thought. The building is well within the border of our work-a-day world. A tabernacle, Elihu calls it. The allusion is to Nature—God's great out-of-doors. 'Can any understand the noise of his tabernacle?' Much depends upon the answer one is able to make to the question.

1. Job was in great trouble, and consequently sore perplexed. Having lost property, loved ones and health all in a twinkling, he finds himself plunged into that tangled woodland of speculation well known to the afflicted. He must find his way out into the clearing. Being a good man, he first turns to theology for comfort, and theology breaks down under the weight of so great and undeserved woe. Quite naturally he then looks to his friends. But friends fail in this crisis. He dismisses them with the words, 'Miserable comforters are ye all.' He seeks consolation from his wife, and the only light she is able to throw upon the problem is: 'Change your religion. There must be something radically wrong with your belief in Providence and the profit of godliness. Surely a loving God would not permit you to suffer thus. Curse God and die!'

Finding his trusted supports gone, Job is thrown back upon his own intellectual processes. His mind wanders about blindly through the universe crying, Why, Why, Why? But there is no answering voice. No sound comes to his ear but the ceaseless grinding of the wheels of that remorseless machine known variously as cosmos, force, law. No compassion looks down upon him from the eyeless sockets of fate. He senses no warm thrill as, reaching up out of a sea of trouble, he grasps the dead hand of philosophy. He is desolate, alone, defeated before the mystery of being. Yet not alone, for in his extremity God finds the afflicted man, and with loving hand conducts him into the temple of Nature, that he may there read the meaning of it all, and come at last to know the harmony of life, which too close proximity to single blatant notes has made it impossible for him to discern.

Those hours alone with God out-of-doors were the greatest of Job's life. It was an experience never to be forgotten. He was shown the foundations of the tabernacle, the beams laid in light, the dome as of molten glass supported upon pillars of morning and pillars of evening, and the many encircling galleries, mountain upon mountain, tier above tier. His attention is called to the sunrise tapestries, the verdant carpeting and the starry chandeliers, particularly to the Pleiades and the Orion cluster.

'You shall now hear my great organ.' So

saying, God drew the vox-angelica stop, and Job heard the music of insect life; the flute and piccolo stops, and he listened to the music of bird life; the trumpet stop, and the instrument gave forth the rich, strong tones of animal life. Then came the dulcimer, the music of pattering raindrops. Finally the deep-throated double open diapason was heard as reverberating thunder shook the temple to its very foundation.

At this psychological moment the Almighty turned suddenly upon his perplexed servant with the question, 'Where wast thou when I made all this? Tell me, if thou canst.' Job has no adequate answer. His soul has been stirred to its utmost depth. In a hushed whisper of reverential awe and humility he speaks, 'I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee. For the first time I understand the noise of Thy Tabernacle. I see it all quite clearly now. I live in a universe of intelligence, power, order, concord and benevolence. Forgive me, Lord, that I ever misjudged or doubted heaven's blessings or thee.'

2. Let us enter God's tabernacle, that we may find for ourselves all that Job found. Habitually men of old, when hard pressed by inexplicable circumstances, sought peace and comfort out of doors, alone with God. 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help,' is the key to the Psalmist's trustful though checkered life. Elijah, in those hours of reaction following the greatest triumph of his life, regained his faith at an organ recital in Nature's temple. The Divine organist used that day the earthquake stop, the fire stop, the wind stop. As the music of the *vox humana* stilled and caressed him, Elijah felt his weariness and despondency dropping from him as clothing from the tired body at bedtime hour. 'Why!' said he, 'there is order, harmony, love, after all!'

Where, if not out of doors, alone with God, did Jesus refresh His soul, strengthen His faith and make resolute His purpose? Long days and nights in the wilderness, nights of prayer in the mountains, alone with God in the garden—there were the everflowing springs from which He slaked His thirst and nerved Himself for the highest and best endeavour.

Man made the cities, God made the country. If we have lost God in the maze of daily life we shall find Him yonder.

Have we been caught in the impact of the 'superman' and the 'under-man'? Have both elbowed God out of consideration? Then let us take a look at the Grand Canyon of Arizona. Perhaps we shall feel as did a famous artist who went thither quite confident he could capture the glories of that scene for his canvas. He came away without unpacking his brushes. When asked for an explanation he said, 'I dared not insult God.'

Do we fear that Christianity, idealism and all the rich heritage of past centuries are lost for ever? Have the springs of sentiment and emotion gone dry? We may take our fears to Kentucky and follow the course of the lost river, so called because it vanishes into a cave no one knows whither.

Do the pounding waves of world-unrest affright us? If we go and stand by the seaside we may be reassured by the voice of Omnipotence, 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no further.'

Have we lost Christ and faith in a Kingdom over which He shall reign? Follow Peter's 'I go a-fishing.' Fishing is a means of grace—at least so I have found it. A hook, a brook, a shady nook—ah, what medicine for shattered nerves and what rehabilitation for a despoiled life!

I once heard Dr. F. B. Meyer tell a Northfield audience how, in the greatest intellectual and spiritual crisis of his life, he fled to a wooded hillside overlooking the town where he was pastor, to escape the doubts and fears that hounded him. He was on the verge of insanity. He had written his resignation and was resolved to demit the ministry. Think of it—he, one of the greatest spiritual preachers of his age! After hours of pacing to and fro, he found his answer, and with it peace, kneeling in prayer beside a fallen tree.[1]

Time, no doubt, heals, and God, perhaps, cares;

[1] A. E. Keigwin, *The Meaning of Life*, 176ff.

It may be there is light beyond the nightmare sky.
These are great thoughts to think, but for poor reeling brains
God, Time, and Light are too vast and too high.
Let me only know
How the beech-woods grow
All round Jordans, where the Friends come and go.
Let me hold in my mind
Things small, sweet and kind,
Apples, and the Chalfonts, and keep sane so.[1]

The Gift of Snow.

Job xxxvii. 6.—'He saith to the snow, Be (RV 'Fall') thou on the earth.'

One of the finest things ever written about snow is Francis Thompson's poem 'To a Snowflake.'

What heart could have thought you?—
Past our devisal
(O filigree petal!)
Fashioned so purely,
Fragilely, surely,
From what Paradisal
Imagineless metal,
Too costly for cost?
Who hammered you, wrought you,
From argentine vapour?—
'God was my shaper.
Passing surmisal,
He hammered, He wrought me,
From curled silver vapour,
To lust of His mind:—
Thou could'st not have thought me!
So purely, so palely,
Tinily, surely,
Mightily, frailly,
Insculped and embossed,
With His hammer of wind,
And His graver of frost.'[2]

The poets and other teachers of the Old Testament use the things in Nature for religious ends far more than we do. We think and speak chiefly of our own spiritual interests—of the danger, salvation, moods, and experiences of our souls; and of our obligations to Christ for what He has done for us. And in giving the work of Christ the supreme religious importance, we are, of course, right. In God it is His greatest glory; in us it is the greatest benefit. But have we not lost something of the old spirit of simple worship? Is not our tendency to an inordinate poring over our selfish interests? We appraise God for what He is worth to us, and lose somewhat the feeling of simple, self-forgetting admiration and praise. We have a half furtive feeling that these old Hebrew Psalms, which so expatiate on the phenomena of Nature, the motions of the planets, the glory of the sun and moon, the beauty of the earth, light and clouds and wind and waving corn, the rustling forest, the birds and the wild beasts, the hills and the valleys and the water-springs, the great sea and its fishes—that these are but meagre in religious expression, and scarcely fit for spiritual uses. We either pass over them, or use them with a sense of their poverty, or with a craving for more than they contain.

What a sublime winter-piece this is! Elihu is vindicating, against the wild complaints of poor Job, the Divine righteousness. He traverses the wide realms of Nature and Providence, and maintains the all-present working and the sublime attributes of the wise, and beneficent, and righteous God. He describes a tempest as possibly its occurrence may have been imagined during the discussion. This subdues him to a meditative mood. He speaks of the 'thoughts which are beyond the reaches of our souls,' and of manifestations of God's majesty kindred to that of the storm. This winter-piece is one of them. The *Haurân*, or district on the North-East of Palestine, was near enough to Hermon and the Lebanon to make Job and his friends familiar with 'the treasures of the snow,' and the keen frost of the Syrian winter. It was at God's word that it came. It was God's ordinance that the winter fulfilled. In its intensity and severity it made the labour of the husbandman

[1] Rose Macaulay, *Three Days*, 24.
[2] *Poems*, ii. 203.

impossible. He seals up the hand of every man—puts an arrest upon every man's toil. He sends the cold out of the North, and with His frost—which is His breath—He 'straiteneth the breadth of the waters.' And in all this He has a religious purpose—'that they may consider His work.' The mysterious change, the marvellous beauty, the enforced leisure of winter, when toil is suspended, and the singing of birds is hushed, and the music of the woods and the streams is silenced, and the awe of His presence is felt, all conduce to religious reflection. Man, in the loneliness of Nature, when even the wild beasts are driven to their lairs, stands alone, and face to face with God.

1. Consider the weakness and the power of the snow. Can anything be gentler and more powerless? It comes not as a ball from the rifle, or an arrow from the bow, or a swooping hawk descending from the sky for its prey. A child's hand catches and subdues it, and, ere he can see it, it is gone. A baby can master that which masters mankind. Boys gather it, and it is submissive; it resists nothing. All things seem stronger than the snow new born. Yet one night's weaving and it covers the earth through wide latitudes and longitudes with a garment that all the looms of the earth could not have furnished. One day more and it sinks fences underneath it, obliterates all roads, and levels the whole land as spade and plough and ten thousand times ten thousand engineers and workmen could not do it. It lays its hand upon the roaring engine, blocks its wheels and stops its motion. It stands before the harbour and lets down a white darkness which baffles the pilot and checks the home-returning ship. It takes the hills and mountains, and, gathering its army until the day comes, without sound of drum or trumpet, it charges down; and who can withstand its coming in battle array? What power is thus in the hosts of weakness! So the thoughts of good men, small, silent, gathering slowly, at length are masters of time and of the ages.

2. Consider, also, that the descending snow has relations not alone thus to fancy, but is a worker too. From the unsullied air the snow brings down fertility in the endless wastes that are going on—exhaled gases from towns and from cities, multiplied forms that are vandals, wanderers in the sky. Caught in the meshes of the snow, the ammoniacal gases and various others are brought down by it and laid upon the soil; and it has become a proverb that the snow, fresh and new fallen, is the poor man's manure. It gathers again the waste material of the earth, whose levity carries it above, and lays with equal distribution over all the lands that which brings back to them their needed fertility. When the snow has covered the garden and the hedge, is it a pall, is it a shroud, or is it not swaddling clothes? The old, abandoned stalks, the brown and withered grass, no longer comely, it puts to rest, and is no doubt a shroud; but underneath is going on those processes that ere long shall bring forth all buds, all comely bloom, and all ripening things. Underneath its twilight, spring is preparing its work. Without sound of wheel, without stroke of hammer, more is going on under the silent snow than in all the smithies, than in all the factories, than in all the dwellings or shops upon the earth. All the forces of Nature in spring, summer, and winter—those forces, whose energy is irresistible, are all hidden. The powers of God in the earth are all silent wonder-workers.

¶ It is the impulse of a religious spirit to recognize the beauty, the wisdom, the grandeur of these manifestations of the Creator. To men who dwell where these sublime forces of winter put forth their giant might there is both opportunity and religious obligation so to study them. And I scarcely think that John Foster's feeling, when he learned that snow had been recognized on the planet Mars—a feeling of sadness because of its indication of suffering and, therefore, of sin—is the right feeling of winter worship. Coleridge was nearer the truth when he said: 'In Nature there is nothing melancholy.' The Ettrick Shepherd was nearer the truth when he said: 'There is no bad weather in Nature.' Winter is not dislocation, chaos, death. It is but a

new form of power, and wonder, and beauty. Is there anything more exquisitely beautiful than a snowflake, more perfectly symmetrical? Crush it, if you will, as it is crushed in our city streets, put a particle of snow under a microscope, its six-rayed form is undestroyed; the treasures of the snow are as wonderful as the clothing of the lily—only we should live in the country fully to appreciate their beauty. 'He giveth snow like wool' is hardly a simile for city streets. Is there anything grander than a snow-storm? Wild chaos, do you call it? lawless destruction? Nay, but this which is disorder to us is pre-eminently His 'order ill-understood.' It is part of God's harmony and wisdom and love.[1]

Fill soft and deep, O winter snow,
The sweet azalia's oaken dells,
And hide the bank where roses blow,
And swing the azure bells!

O'erlay the amber violet's leaves,
The purple aster's brookside home,
Guard all the flowers her pencil gives
A life beyond their bloom.

And she, when spring comes round again,
By greening slope and singing flood
Shall wander, seeking, not in vain,
Her darlings of the wood.[2]

The Sealed Hand.

Job xxxvii. 7.—'He sealeth up the hand of every man; that all men may know his work.'

The primary reference of this statement is to the season of winter. Then the earth is hard with frost, and perhaps covered with snow; for 'by the breath of God frost is given, and the breadth of the waters is straitened.' This brings to man a diminution of power. Scope for his usual activity is cut off. Not only does the labour of the husbandman in great measure cease, but other forms of out-door labour as well. The hand of man is so effectually sealed that, for a time, numerous industries fail. Even if it were otherwise possible to continue them, the intensity of the cold would prevent many from doing so.

But while this is the primary reference of the statement, it may be much more widely applied. The truth is that the text states not so much an isolated fact as a many-sided one. On every side God sets a limit to man. In relation to everything he comes to a point where he finds his hand 'sealed up.' This, no doubt, is a necessity of his limited nature. But God brings it home to him in a variety of ways in order that he may clearly realize it, and yield himself to its moral effect. That is the true significance of the statement. The limitation that comes with the frosts of winter stands for many limitations, and widens out, as we think of it, into a law of our being which meets us everywhere. It is of great importance that man should have a true idea of his relation to the universe, and especially to the God of the universe, and of God's relation both to it and to him. And as we are slow to learn this, God takes pains to impress it upon us: 'He sealeth up the hand of every man, that all men may know his work': may know that, whatever may be thought to the contrary, all things—man included—are in the hand of Him who doeth 'whatsoever things please him, in the heavens above, on the earth beneath, in the sea, and in all deep places'; and that, knowing this, man may have right thoughts of himself and right feelings towards his Maker.

1. He sealeth up man's hand *in the realm of Nature*, that we may know His work in the supply of our necessary food. We can do many things towards extracting from the earth and the elements the food which we need. We can plough and sow and harrow and weed. For all this God has given us power, and He expects us to use it. He has made this our province, and if we fail to occupy it we shall be punished with want. If a man does not sow, he cannot reap. But in this case, and in no case more obviously, man comes to a point where God seals up his hand, and where, in conscious inability to take a single additional step, and perceiving, as he must, the shortcomings of his own work, he is

[1] H. Allon.
[2] Whittier.

led to know and acknowledge the work of God.

We have no power over the clouds and the sunshine. We cannot lay our finger on the hidden springs of Nature, and secure the rain or the heat at our pleasure. We may prepare the soil, we may deposit the seed, and we may take care that the strength of the soil is not exhausted by weeds. But that is all we can do. The matter then passes out of our hands. When we have completed our operations in the fields of the earth we cannot mount to the sky and continue our operations in those higher fields which are equally connected with the result. We must be content to remain where we are, praying and waiting. The matter is now in the hand of the Creator, who at this point 'sealeth up' that of the creature, that all men may know His work.

2. God sealeth up the hand of man *by events in Providence*, that all men may know His work as the Ruler of the world. Providence is just God's work in this sense. It sets Him before us as the righteous Governor of the universe. And it is exceedingly important that men, communities, and nations should know His work in this regard. And in order that they may, He not infrequently seals up their hands. They can do many things, but they cannot do everything. They cannot do all that they would. This comes very much from the concealments of Providence. Enough is revealed to make duty clear, but not to make ambition safe, and not to make the schemings of men or nations calculable in their results. The future belongs to God. No man can tell what it holds in reserve, or what sudden and unexpected turns it may take, or whether any one of his schemes will be crowned with success. Every period of our life opens some fresh page, the contents of which no human sagacity can forecast. The causes of events in their complicated interaction God keeps in His own hand, and all that the highest creature-wisdom can attain to is such a degree of probability as may furnish a basis for distant and doubtful conjecture.

Now this uncertainty, both on the favourable side and on the unfavourable, is a limiting thing. It stamps man's works with a charter of doubt which enfeebles the worker, and seals up his hand, whereas a clearer knowledge would have made him energetic and free. And in man's present position this limitation is salutary. It checks at once his ambition and his pride. It takes his eye off himself when he perceives how short-sighted he is, and how often mistaken, and forces upon him the thought of God and His work—just as it did with the Assyrian king who, from being a god to himself, was brought to praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, 'all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.'

¶ While Andrew Bruce Davidson was a Prizeman in every Greek and Latin class, Mathematics was his strong subject. 'I became intimate with him,' writes William Cormack, 'during his last year at Marischal College. He was then working hard at Mathematics with a view to competing for a scholarship. I was struck by his quick intelligence, and the ease with which he mastered geometrical problems. Even then I anticipated for him a famous career in life.' . . . In the mathematical class, taught by Professor Cruickshank, Andrew had a rival in William Mair, a lad from the Schoolhouse of Savoch, to the north of Ellon, who was a year his senior. In the third year Davidson was second and Mair third in this subject. It was at the end of the fourth year that the Mathematical Scholarship of £60 was open for competition. The best student, a man named Anderson, who afterwards became a schoolmaster, had been working at Mathematics a year longer than the others, and if he had competed he would no doubt have defeated both Davidson and Mair. But as he did not think it honourable to enter, the contest lay between the two Buchan boys, and Mair came off victorious. . . . Dr. Mair still lives in greatly honoured old age in Edinburgh. He recently said to me with a smile that if he had not defeated Davidson in the scholarship competition, the latter would probably have become a Professor of Mathematics and been lost to Old Testament and Semitic

learning. The hypothetical point may be left undecided. I would say 'possibly' rather than 'probably.' There are in every life might-have-beens which awaken a lively sense of gratitude, as well as others which occasion regret. It may well be doubted whether Andrew Davidson would ever have consented to give his life to the teaching of Algebra or Physics. . . . Still it cannot be denied that the disappointment, regarded as God's appointment, may have been one of the facts which helped to shape his destiny. Many of his students will recall the thrill with which they listened to his great lecture on the 'Call of Jeremiah,' in which he says: 'When we are in something like the position of this prophet, undertaking a serious responsibility, and can recall things in our history which we cannot but regard as providential, determining our course in life, and leading us on towards the place which we are going to occupy, it does strengthen our hope that God is now calling us to this place. The things we remember may be small, indeed trifles; but when we take a broad view of life, they acquire a greater magnitude. Our minds were, perhaps, fixed on a certain career in life, but in order to pursue it, it was necessary that we should gain some distinction in learning, or obtain some position, and we failed; and the failure altered our whole career: and now we are where we are, about to enter upon a calling more sacred. Providences of this kind, being internal, strike us more readily; and reflecting on them does enable us to find God in our life. Indeed, though we ordinarily overlook such things from want of thought, when we are led more seriously to consider our history, we find it full of them.'[1]

3. God sealeth up man's hand *by affliction*, that men may know His work in their individual life. Affliction is no doubt a part of Providence; but it is an isolated part. It is individual in its action, and it enforces the knowledge of God's work in the personal sphere. It is an effectual check. It reigns in the strongest. We are apt to be struck with the power of some men, it is so great, and their success is so brilliant. It may be a statesman, who seems necessary to his country. His name is a watchword. His counsels always prevail. His policy is approved before it is known. He settles questions of peace or war. He is more than trusted, even loved, at home, and he is more than respected, even feared, abroad. We feel as if his power were all but unlimited, and he begins to feel the same himself. But affliction comes to him, and opens both our eyes and his. We now perceive that his power is not unlimited, and that he is compassed about with infirmity even as we are. Already the prestige of his name is lessened, and men are thinking of his successor. We saw only man's work before; but while we were looking at the worker with ever growing admiration, and virtually making him an idol, God sealed up his hands, and we see God's work now. And it is time, for we were putting the creature out of his place, and forgetting Him who giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to the men of understanding, and who is now saying to us, 'Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.'

But it is not only those in high places who require this lesson. We all require it. There is a beguilement about unbroken prosperity which is hard to resist. It is an enchanted ground where we are apt to become heavy with sleep. All is so pleasant, and we seem to have the springs of all good so much in our own hand that we say, 'To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.' And thus, 'because our strength is firm, and we are not in trouble as other men, neither are plagued like other men, therefore pride compasseth us about as a chain.' 'In my prosperity, I said, I shall never be moved . . . thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.'

When affliction seals up our hand we feel how little we had in our own power, even when we were at our best, and how completely we were at the mercy of a higher power. And we see also how well things can go on without us. We fancied ourselves to be so necessary that much would stop should we stop, and that nothing short of a wide paralysis must come with the sealing up of our hands. But our

[1] J. Strachan, *Andrew Bruce Davidson*, 37.

hand is sealed up, and there is no great difference. Things go on very much as they did, and we are not so great in our own eyes as we were. Our own work shrinks into nothing, and God's work rises into view.

4. God scaleth up the hand of every man when by His Spirit *He convinces him of sin,* that all may know His work in the matter of the soul's salvation.

For, until this conviction comes, a man is very easy about his salvation. It does not trouble him. He does not know himself as a sinner, nor does he know God as the enemy of sin; and he is ready to say 'Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?' But this consciousness of guilt is a new experience. It opens his eyes to his real position, and many things which were natural to him before are now impossible. His life is restricted, fettered, and so tyrannized over by this recent discovery, that his hand is virtually sealed up to everything else.

But there is more than this; for he naturally desires to be delivered from a position and feelings so painful. The burden is weighing him down. He cannot bear it; and he tries many ways of deliverance. He tries self-reformation, and, like Herod, he 'does many things,' but with no result. The reformation is itself imperfect, and it never touches the guilt of the past. Again he tries; and now come gifts, ceremonies, services, sacrifices, self-immolation, suffering of the body for the sin of the soul. Equally ineffectual all; for they are all efforts of the creature to be a saviour to himself, which is impossible. And so he battles round the whole circle of human expedients, only to find his hand absolutely and for ever sealed up as regards achieving salvation for himself.

What happens then? At last, by constraint as it were, the man looks away from himself to God. He seeks to know God's work in the matter, seeing his own hand is sealed. And he comes to know it—to know what sort of a work it is; how it came; what it cost; what it consists in; and how entirely it is a free and unmerited act and gift of mercy and love through Jesus Christ our Lord. God 'sealed up his hand' as regarded all merits of his own, for this very purpose that he might 'know His work'; and the knowledge has come with such a rush of conviction and access of faith that he accepts it greedily, and his burden falls off, and he rejoices in hope of the glory of God.

And that which loosens his burden unseals his hands, giving him motive and scope in the region of grace which, being a sinner, he could never have had in the region of law. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' He stands in a 'large place' now, for Christ is within him, and the broad shield of His atonement is over him, and he runs in the way of His commandments with a sweet sense of the glorious liberty of the children of God, having his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

¶ George Whitefield was only a schoolboy when it first dawned upon him that, between him and the kingdom of God, a frightful chasm yawned. 'I got acquainted,' he says, 'with such a set of debauched, abandoned, atheistical youths that if God, by His free grace, had not delivered me out of their hands, I should long ago have sat in the scorner's chair. I took pleasure in their lewd conversation. My thoughts of religion became more and more like theirs. I affected to look rakish, and was in a fair way of being as infamous as the worst of them.' Then came the sudden arrest, the quick realisation of his folly; and the vision of the hideous blackness of his own heart. But how to cure it? that was the problem. He resolved to change, at any rate his *outward* bearing. 'As, once, I affected to look more rakish, so now I strove to appear more grave than I really was.' This, however, was cold comfort; it was like painting rotten wood: he was conscious all the time of the concealed corruption. He tried another course. He denied himself every luxury; wore ragged and even dirty clothes; ate no foods but those that were repugnant to him; fasted altogether twice a week; gave his money to the poor; and spent whole nights in prayer lying prostrate on the cold stones or the wet grass. But it was all of no avail. He felt that there was something radically

wrong in the very heart of him, something that all this penance and self-degradation could not change. Then came the Angel of Deliverance; and the Angel of Deliverance bore three golden keys. One was a *man;* one was a *book;* one was a *text.*

The *man* was Charles Wesley, the minstrel of Methodism. George Whitefield and Charles Wesley were, by this time, fellow-students at Oxford. Wesley noticed the tall, grave youth, always walking alone, apparently in deep thought; and he felt strangely drawn to him.

In those days Charles Wesley also was groping after the light: he could not, therefore, solve his new friend's aching problem: but he could lend him the books that he himself was reading, and he did.

The *book* that Charles Wesley lent George Whitefield was Henry Scougal's *The Life of God in the Soul of Man.* He read it with amazement and delight. It told him exactly what he longed to know. He learned for the first time that true religion is a union of the soul with God: it is Christ formed within us. 'When I read this,' he says, 'a ray of divine light instantaneously darted in upon my soul; and, from that moment, but not till then, did I know that I must become *a new creature.*' He is a young man of twenty-one. 'After having undergone innumerable buffetings by day and night, God was pleased at length,' he says, 'to remove my heavy load and to enable me, by a living faith, to lay hold on His dear Son. And oh! with what joy—joy unspeakable and full of glory—was I filled when the weight of sin left me and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God broke in upon my disconsolate soul!' His first act in his ecstasy was to write to all his relatives. 'I have found,' he tells them, 'that there is such a thing as *the new birth.*'

'*I must be a new creature!*'

'*There is such a thing as the new birth!*'

'*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God!*'

It was thus that the *man* introduced the *book;* and the *book* introduced the *text;* and the *text* led George Whitefield into the kingdom of God. 'I know the exact place,' he says. 'It may perhaps be superstitious, but, whenever I go to Oxford, I cannot help running to the spot where Jesus Christ first revealed Himself to me and gave me *a new birth.*'[1]

Winter.

Job xxxvii. 10.—'By the breath of God frost (RV 'ice') is given.'

It is but a frost, we say, and yet every liquid surface has gently undergone a process of crystallization; every particle of moisture has submitted to one symmetric law; infinite forms of beauty have been fashioned in the very wantonness of affluence, crystals laid on crystals, delicately interpenetrating, and lighter than gossamer. With such infinite beauty is the winter garment of the earth woven. The diamonds of Nature glitter on every tree; light is prismatically reflected from every point; every lake and pond becomes a sea of glass; every window-pane is full of the fantasies of Nature's perfect pencil.

Well might Catherine of Russia imagine the splendour of an ice palace. Well might the Creator challenge Job: 'Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail? Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.'

Winter may be made the text of an important social study. It has potent influences upon character, and upon the duties and sympathies of life.

1. What a lesson it is in the distribution of God's gifts! Our winter is necessary that the Antipodes may have its summer. It is much to learn that others have equal claims upon the bounty of the Great Father. Everywhere Nature—God's order—rebukes selfishness. God cares for all His widespread family.

2. Winter is potent as a social civilizer. It is out of struggle, necessity, and privation that the noblest character grows. Physical

[1] F. W. Boreham, *A Casket of Cameos,* 47.

affluence often causes mental and moral waste. Is not manhood more robust and noble as it recedes from the tropics? Winter has called forth the highest ingenuity in the arts of life. The South Sea Islanders have no such incentives to mechanical and social invention; they need no devices of clothing against the cold; they need no such laborious culture of necessary food. How large a proportion of the arts of civilized life have come of winter cold and sterility! How much, therefore, of industry, energy, hardihood! We are made perfect through suffering. All the regal races of the earth lie within the wintry zone. Winter is a severe nurse of our manhood, and makes it robust.

3. Winter appeals especially to human charities and sympathies. It is a season of privation, hardship, and suffering; ills that may come upon ourselves come upon many of our fellow-men. Who could sit by his own plentiful fireside without thinking of the homeless and shelterless, the destitute, and the sick? Who could lie in his warm bed without an exclamation, if not a prayer, 'God help the poor'? Hardly can even selfishness itself enjoy its comfort without a thought of others. Meet an old man in the streets; you feel towards him more reverently and pitifully as you experience the bitter blast. Think of the angry sea; and your heart prays for the shipwrecked mariner. In your comfortable homes you think of the squalid hovel or dingy cellar or bitter archway; of the grip of hunger and the pinching cold; of destitution, of sickness, the cry of hungry children, the moan of helpless mothers, the bitterness of unalleviated death. It is good for us to have these kindlier and more unselfish feelings excited, to be constrained thus to wise and helpful charities.

4. The supreme analogy of winter is death. How we feel it when we make our graves in the snow, bury our dead among the bare trees and in the frozen earth! It excites a feeling altogether unique. To this winter of human life we all must come. But even this need not dismay us. The direst winter can but make way for the coming succession of spring. None of us would crave a spring of mortal requickening; but how the great hope of heavenly resurrection comes to us with assurance and joy! Not more surely will the seeds of things buried in the earth fructify and bud and blossom in the spring than 'this corruptible shall put on incorruptible,' and we shall rise to the summer life of God that knows no winter death.

Life itself will bring healing to many wounds of death, and there are griefs which Time, dropping moments after moments into the scar, will cover over as the snowbeds cover the fields. Lowell has very sweetly uttered this thought:—

I stood and watched by the window
The noiseless work of the sky,
And the sudden flurries of snow-birds,
Like brown leaves whirling by.

I thought of a mound in Sweet Auburn
Where a little headstone stood;
How the flakes were folding it gently,
As did robins the babes in the wood.

Up spoke our own little Mabel,
Saying, 'Father, who makes it snow?'
And I told of the good All-father,
Who cares for us here below.

Again I looked at the snow-fall,
And thought of the leaden sky
That arched o'er our first great sorrow,
When that mound was heaped so high.

I remembered the gradual patience
That fell from that cloud like snow,
Flake by flake, healing and hiding
The scar that renewed our woe.

And again to the child I whispered,
'The snow that husheth all,
Darling, the merciful Father
Alone can make it fall!'

The Wondrous Works of God.

Job xxxvii. 14.—'Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.'

That portion of the Book of Job which gives us the views of Elihu is considered by many scholars to be a late addition to the poem. It expresses the point of view of the younger generation of Jews. Elihu is their representative. They did not intend to make him represent their vices as well as their virtues; but they drew their own picture better than they knew. The young school was what we should call very cocksure, and just a little contemptuous of older schools of thought. Its members were more than half convinced that wisdom had been born with them, and would very probably die with them. But there are evidences in Elihu's discourse that they were not insensitive to the wonder and the beauty of the universe of which they were a part. And while their contribution to the problem of pain and the suffering of innocence is of little worth, yet the example they afford of a young mind 'superficially omniscient,' to use Charles Lamb's famous phrase, and more conceited than is good for it, and yet seemingly awed and ennobled and inspired by the contemplation of the fathomless mystery and splendour of creation, is an example of the utmost value to us to-day.

The last part of Elihu's utterance redeems the first. It is a passage of genuine eloquence, betraying powers of observation and feeling. 'Stand still,' is his appeal to his hearers, 'and consider the wondrous works of God.' Then with a few poetic touches he describes some of the phenomena that fascinate and solemnize the thinker—the flash of lightning from the thunder-cloud; the balancing of the clouds as they ride upon the upper air; the mesmerizing of the earth into that mystic dreamy sleep wrought by the waving of the magic wand of the south wind; the firmament aglow with light like a molten mirror; and the wonder of the wind as it cleanses the skies of clouds, sweeping them clean and bright. And as the clouds are rolled away, and they catch the radiance of the sun, he exclaims, 'Out of the north cometh golden splendour.'

It is all the dear familiar pageant that is the monopoly, thank God, of no land and no race. Before the least sensitive, the most savage and animal of races, God has cast His pearls unheeded. And yet never entirely unheeded, as countless rude altars attest, altars built to the deities that manifest their power in the sun and the moon, the thunder and the lightning, the tempest and the rain. But surely to us these words of Elihu come with some urgency of appeal. 'Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God.' In the headlong race of to-day, which is to the swift and the strong—and some say to the unscrupulous and the merciless—in the eager pursuit of pleasure, money, power, this is a voice crying in the wilderness. 'Stand still and consider'—'Pause and think!' We in the cities have done what we can to build God and Nature out of vision. Great business houses tower on either hand, narrowing our horizon to this sphere of duty and pleasure. But nothing can affect the fact that we tread a temple floor. Over us, if we had time to see it, is the spangled roof of the infinite dome where the points of gold are vaster worlds than this. Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Sordid and squalid may be our outlook in the office or room where our work is done. But, as old George Herbert used to put it, God's servants wait upon us day and night. We live and work as much among the mysteries as the farmer or the gardener does. The mysteries of air and light and warmth are always with us.

> The stars have us to bed;
> Night draws the curtain which the sun withdraws,
> Music and light attend our head.

'I have never had time to feel things,' says the American millionaire in one of Henry James' books, 'I have had to make myself felt.' That is a common experience to-day. The man whose one aim is to force his way to the front has no time to feel things. He has got to make himself felt. Hence a process of hardening goes on insensibly; and when his earthly ambition is fulfilled he has lost that

sensibility to what is great and beautiful and wonderful which lies at the very foundation of the noblest character.

1. We can all consider the lilies and the birds of the air, and think the thoughts of Jesus after Him as He interprets the parables of God in Nature. We can all stand still and consider the marvellous works of God; and give our minds and hearts up to the awe of His majesty which His works inspire. And the resulting gain in reverence will prove itself a quality of inestimable worth in the building of character, the making of manhood. For in no connection do Coleridge's well-known words apply more certainly than in this:

> We receive but what we give.

¶ Once upon a time Viscount Morley wrote an introduction to the poetry of Wordsworth. It is quite as interesting to me as a revelation of the author as a revelation of the subject. In one passage he singles out that famous verse:

> One impulse from a vernal wood
> Will teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Then all the sages can.

As you may perhaps imagine, Viscount Morley flatly contradicts the saying. He says a vernal wood can teach you nothing at all about good and evil. He says the verse may be a half-playful sally for the benefit of a bookish friend. Did it never occur to him that sometimes even a bunch of flowers given away in a slum has started thoughts and feelings after better things; that an impulse from a violet or a cowslip has made an evil life ugly, and carried a new vision of the beauty of purity? Has it never occurred to him that for an 'impulse' to come to any soul in the green woods it must come, in Wordsworth's philosophy, as an influence from the Soul of all Things and the Source of all Good? For my part I come to believe with Mr. Bailey, the author of 'Festus':

> Some souls lose all things but the love of beauty,
> And by that love they are redeemable,
> For the love of beauty is the love of good,
> And good is God.

I tell you frankly, I have never known a man whose delight was in the works of Nature who was ever radically evil. Do not let the sense of the beautiful, and of the God behind the beautiful, die. Bring to Nature an attentive heart; and remember ever, I beseech you, she will be sought out, as the Psalmist said, by all those, and only those, who have pleasure therein.[1]

2. While it is true that

> He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small,

it is true that this love has a source. It is in the disciples of Jesus that we look for the love which prompts to prayer. In the school of Jesus this is the spirit we receive. It is your St. Francis, humbled and exalted by the redemption of Christ, who is, as it were, received by the same mystic rite into the brotherhood of all creation—of the beasts, and the fishes, and the birds and the flowers. The soul redeemed of Christ is awake to the largess of Heaven as God openeth His hand and satisfieth the desires of every living thing. May none of us lose the quick sensibility to this glorious truth as we walk the more prosaic paths of manhood and womanhood. But may these lines of Wordsworth be our guerdon:

> The youth, who daily farther from the east
> Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
> And by the vision splendid
> Is on his way attended.

¶ I say my morning prayers whenever possible kneeling at the open window, so, while I bathe my soul in the Divine, bathing my body in that pure outer air which is the sign and sacrament of the Divine Presence. To-day it seemed as if a beautiful altar-piece had been built in the night by angels to lift up our hearts. The majesty of that incomparable mountain line, the lake that reflected

[1] C. Silvester Horne.

it, the sky, the air, the light! They drew me away from my daily petitions into a burst of thanksgiving. Climbing to Glion on January 30th, a sunny, crisp day, was like a chapter in Revelation. The Grammont mountains seemed to belong to the New Jerusalem. Their beauty marked that high pitch which pierces as well as delights and passes quickly into longing—that longing the least have felt and the greatest have failed to explain.[1]

Three Wondrous Works.

Job xxxvii. 14.—'Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.'

THERE are three things in the works of God which are wonderful: (1) The Wonder of Nature, (2) The Wonder of Human Life, (3) The Wonder of Redemption.

1. *The wonder of Nature.*—Prophets and Psalmists prostrate themselves before the majesty of God as revealed in Nature. They adore the awful Power that spread out the sky with its unsearched spaces and stayed the proud waves of the sea that it should not overflow the land. 'When I consider thy heavens,' says the Psalmist, 'the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained: what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?' It is this aspect of Nature, its illimitable range, its overwhelming magnificence, as compared with any works wrought by human hands, that first strikes the mind with admiring awe; and this is the impression which is the last to fade away. He would be an exceptionally thoughtless man who did not feel like the philosopher Kant when he said that 'the starry heavens above filled him with a boundless reverence and adoration.' And it is not only in the heavens that Nature is glorious, but here on the earth, about us on every hand. The unfailing alternation of day and night, the succession of the seasons, the light upon a summer sea—what a wealth of Divine power and goodness lies behind these, and produced them! And yet how easily we come to take them all for granted, and never stop to wonder at them. If only our eyes were opened to behold their glory, how we should be drawn to worship. And this is where the great artists of the world help us; they give us eyes, as it were.

¶ The function of the painter, as Browning says, is to be an interpreter of God's revelation in Nature.

> We're made so that we love
> First when we see them painted, things we have passed
> Perhaps a hundred times, nor cared to see;
> Art was given for that;
> God uses us to help each other so,
> Lending our minds out.

And so it is with those other great artists, the poets. How much they perceive that is invisible to us! But we see it after them. When Shakespeare tells us of

> The daffodils
> That come before the swallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty,

we learn from him to discover a fresh charm in the lovely flower that fears not the wind and storm of early spring. In the same way, the song of the lark singing unseen in the upper air is ever a marvel to us; but we find a new wonder in it when we have considered what Wordsworth says of it—

> A privacy of glorious light is thine:

so alone it seems, but it is alone in the privacy not of darkness but of light; it is lost in a blinding glory. As we think of it thus, the wonder of it grows upon us. We understand all this when the poet has taught us it; but he felt it first.[1]

2. *The wonder of human life.*—If men lose much when they become blind to the wonder of God in Nature, they lose more when they cease to see the marvel of human life as God has made it. Yet how seldom do we consider the wonder of it—each soul among us so separate, so solitary, so burdened with inalienable

[1] *Lanoe Falconer*, 285.

[1] D. W. Forrest.

responsibilities, coming into the world alone, going out of it alone; existing, as it were, by itself before God; and yet each of us in our work or our happiness so much dependent upon others, so closely bound to them that what we are to them and what they are to us not only affects our present action and comfort, but goes far to determine the character which they and we shall carry across the gulf of death. On the one hand, we seem to stand apart by ourselves. When we sin, the sin is ours and no one else's; as each has to eat for himself, so each has to believe for himself; others cannot act for us in the great decisions of the soul. But, on the other hand, there is nothing more astonishing than the extent to which this separate soul of ours can be blessed or blighted by its neighbours; soured and crushed by their unkindness, or uplifted and made strong by their sympathy and encouragement. We ourselves can, perhaps, recall a time when a little friendly act from some unexpected quarter breathed new life into us, and we went in the strength of it many days. No doubt he who thus refreshed and comforted us was hardly aware that he was doing so much. But that is just where the marvel of human fellowship comes in. Any day, any hour, for aught we can tell, some golden opportunity may come to us of brotherly service or generous word which shall raise a depressed or resentful heart out of its dark moods and cause the sun to shine for it. Ay, and not only for it, but for many more whose lives it touches. For, as such a one goes from us, renewed and brightened, he does his work better, he is filled with kinder thoughts, carries happiness to others. And so the good deed perpetuates and extends itself in ways beyond our conceiving.

Surely it is very wonderful to know that God has made it possible for all of us thus to live in the lives of our brethren; has given so great a power of blessing others even to the humblest men and women; has ordained that the lowliest lives may touch by their beneficence ever widening circles of humanity. It is true that, directly, we have to do only with those whom we meet, but through them we are in contact with untold multitudes of souls. That is the strange power of human influence. And when we consider what we might have done, and have failed to do, in shedding benediction around us, we stand awe-struck before the neglected possibilities of our life. That God should have charged us with these responsibilities for one another is truly one of His wondrous works.

¶ Commerce and Christianity both are thrusting responsibility upon the shoulders of every man, and the law of life compels him to carry it. Consider the number of human beings an ordinary business man touches in a single day, or even a woman in the home. Almost every article brought to the door is carried by a separate individual. All these influence others, and they in turn others. Who will dare to make a calculation of this large sum?

Human mathematics are out of place in this higher sphere. Remember that you never meet an immortal soul in any capacity or glance at a human face without exerting this stupendous force upon it. The way you speak, or look, or move is the revelation of your actual self, and bears fruit a hundredfold in the rich soil of human life.

Character is contagious. In every greeting and moment of conversation, in every letter, there is a subtle influence that goes far from us and reaches further and makes deeper impressions than any anticipation on our part.

The noblest soul does not cry, 'Oh, God, make me pure and truthful, and kingly for my own sake.' The greater effect is upon others, and the holiest ambition is to possess the richest character for the sake of others. It is not life unto self, but in the relation to countless other lives.

A lonely and uninhabited island is the only place for a false, base, and impure life. The tragedy of life is this power and certainty of contamination. No man can escape this grave responsibility.[1]

3. *The wonder of redemption.*—Another work of God which may well stir us to wonder is His redeeming mercy, the way in which He makes evil the means of good. When we

[1] Cortland Myers, *Making a Life*, 127.

have seen someone lying in the grip of a protracted and painful disease, have we not sometimes been perplexed that a merciful God should have permitted it? But while that may have been our first thought, yet, if we had eyes to see and a mind to understand, it cannot have been our last. For, as we watched the sufferer, we found that the fires of the furnace were purifying him as fine gold; that, as the sickness dragged its weary course, he was learning a finer patience, a submission, an unselfishness that he had not known before; that with the enfeeblement of the body the soul was growing more beautiful. And what a wealth of compassion and tenderness was developed and drawn out in those who stood by to minister and console. Out of the evil sprang a higher good, which otherwise had not been. Could there be a clearer proof that a Supreme Goodness is behind all suffering, transmuting it from defeat to victory? And may we not well call this a wondrous work of God? It is more wonderful than would be the extinction of all suffering, because it makes the things which are most painful to be the instruments of lofty purposes.

And it is even more marvellous when God makes wickedness to bring forth blessing. For sin is the one thing in the universe wholly intolerable to Him. Suffering may be the portion of the good: God does not hate it, else His own Son had not endured it. But sin is a thing which He does hate, for it is the defiance of His will. That being so, have we ever felt how strange it is that He should be so patient with it? If men are rebels against the King's law, would it not seem natural that He should crush them out, and raise up another race to honour and serve Him? But what He does is to devise means whereby the rebels may be turned into true and loyal citizens; nay, all the more loyal that they have once been rebellious. This sounds a paradox; but it is the way in which God acts. St. Paul could not forget that he had once been an abetter of those who stoned Stephen, that he had once been a persecutor; and the memory stung him to a more intense devotion as an Apostle of Christ. Augustine, who in his youth had sounded the depth of depravity, became an unequalled expounder of the grace of God, and takes rank before multitudes who never wandered so far. So the last are made first. It is the Lord's doing: and it is marvellous in our eyes.

But the gospel of a free forgiveness is indeed the greatest wonder of God's works. It is an astonishment to the penitent sinner himself. When a man is broken down at the thought of his own recklessness, miserable under the rebukes of an accusing conscience that keeps upbraiding him for the folly he has committed, for the grief he has caused to those who loved him best—as he sits there humbled at the recollection, and hears the voice of Christ the Holy One, saying, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee; go and sin no more,' what a thrill of joy pulses within him. Once he felt himself a prisoner chained to a bitter past; now he has a future, and hope shines for him. Yes, that word of gracious pardon always comes to the penitent soul as a surprise. To him it is an amazing gift of love. It appears hardly credible that so precious a boon should be conferred on one so little deserving. His soul is dissolved in humility before the mystery of the Father's mercy.

If my shut eyes should dare their lids to part,
I know how they must quail beneath the blaze
Of thy love's greatness. No; I dare not raise
One prayer to look aloft, lest I should gaze
On such forgiveness as would break my heart.[1]

Light in the Cloud.

Job xxxvii. 21.—'And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds; but the wind passeth, and cleanseth them.'

This evening the skies are covered with massive banks of cloud; to-morrow morning the sky is as clear and blue as it is possible to see it. The clouds have gone. To-night you cannot see the bright light that is in the skies, because the skies are covered with clouds; but in the night the wind rises, and the sky is cleansed of the cloud. And just as the breath of God will scatter the clouds and bring the azure sky into vision, so His breath will one

[1] George MacDonald.

day scatter all the clouds of mystery that hang about our life. 'And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds; but the wind passeth, and cleanseth them.'

That is Elihu's meaning. The poets have adopted his figure—Longfellow, for instance, says:—

Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining.

Whittier says:

Who murmurs that in these dark days his lot is cast;
God's hand behind the shadow lays the stones
Whereon His gates of praise shall rise at last.

Cowper, tempted to depression and almost to despair, says, in a hymn that has brought comfort to thousands of perplexed souls:

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face.

1. We live under a cloud, and see God's way only by a dim light. We find ourselves hedged in by mystery on every side. All our seeming knowledge is skirted, close at hand, by dark confines of ignorance. However drunk with conceit we may be, however ready to judge everything, we still comprehend almost nothing.

What, then, does it mean? Is God jealous of intelligence in us? Has He purposely drawn a cloud over His ways to baffle the search of our understanding? Exactly the contrary. He is a Being who dwells in light, and calls us to walk in the light with Him. He has set His works about us to be a revelation to us always of His power and glory. His Word He gives us to be the expression of His will and character, and bring us into acquaintance with Himself. His Spirit He gives us to be a teacher and illuminator within. By all His providential works He is training intelligence in us and making us capable of knowledge.

No view of the subject can be true, therefore, that accuses Him. The true account appears to be that the cloud under which we are shut down is not heavier than it must be. How can an infinite Being be understood or comprehended by a finite being? And when this infinite Being has plans that include infinite quantities, times, and relations, in which every present event is the last link of a train of causes reaching downward from a past eternity, and is to be connected also with every future event of a future eternity, how can a mortal, placed between these two eternities, without knowing either, understand the present fact, whatever it be, whose reasons are in both?

Besides, we have only just begun to be; and a begun existence is, by the supposition, one that has just begun to know, and has everything to learn. How then can we expect to master in a few short years the knowledge of God and His universal kingdom? What can He be to us but a mystery? We open our infantile eyes and begin to look about, perceive, handle, suffer, act and be acted on, and, proceeding in this manner, we gather in, by degrees, our data and material of knowledge. And so, by trial, comparison, distinction, the study of effects and wants, of rights and wrongs, of uses and abuses, we frame judgments of things, and begin to pass our verdict on the matters we know. But how long will it take us to penetrate, in this manner, the real significance of God's dealings with us and the world, and pass a really illuminated judgment on them? And yet, if we but love the right, God will be revealed in us internally as the object of our love and trust. He will not appear to be distant, or difficult. We shall know Him as a friendly presence in our heart's love, and we shall have such a blessed confidence in Him that if, in the outer world of fact and event, clouds and darkness appear to be round about Him, we shall have the certainty within that justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne.

¶ The Word of God is not slow to acknowledge that there is a mysterious element in life. It speaks of 'secret things'; of 'the judgments which are a great deep'; of 'the clouds and

darkness which are round about Him'; of 'the deep things of God.' We are surrounded by mysteries. Every step we take we are brought face to face with problems we are unable to solve. There is a striking passage in which a great philosopher describes the thought which occurred to him of the inscrutable schemes of Providence as he saw in St. Paul's Cathedral a fly moving on one of the pillars. 'It requires,' he says, 'some comprehension in the eye of an intelligent spectator to take in at one view the various parts of the building in order to observe their symmetry and design. But to a fly, whose prospect was confined to a little part of one of the stones of a single pillar, the joint beauty of the whole, or the distinct use of its parts, was inconspicuous. To that limited view, the irregularities on the surface of the hewn stone seemed to be so many deformed rocks and precipices.' Even so, the sorrow which appears to us to be nothing but a yawning chasm or hideous precipice may prove to be the cement which binds together the fragments of our existence into a solid whole.[1]

2. There is abundance of light on the other side of the cloud, and above it. This we might readily infer from the fact that so much of light shines through. When the clouds overhead are utterly black, too black to be visible, we understand that it is night, or that the sun is absent; but, when there is a practical and sufficient light for our works, we know that the sun is behind them, and we call it day. So it is when God spreads a cloud upon His throne. We could not even see the mystery, if there were no light behind it, just as we could not see the clouds if no light shone through.

The experience of every soul that turns to God is a convincing proof that there is light somewhere. Is it a man struggling with great afflictions, an injured man crushed by heavy wrongs; is it a man desolated and broken down by domestic sorrows; is it a rich man stripped by sore losses and calamities; is it a proud man blasted by slander; is it an atheist groping after curious knowledge, and starving on the chaff of questions unresolved? —when they come to Christ and believe in Him, it is their common surprise to find how suddenly everything becomes luminous. Speculatively, they understand nothing that before was hidden, and yet there is a wondrous glory shining on their path. God is revealed within, and God is light. Their dark questions are forgotten, or left behind. They have even become insignificant. Their dignity is gone, and the soul, basking in the blessed sunshine of God's love, thinks it nothing any more if it could understand all mysteries. In all which it is made plain that, if we are under the cloud, there is yet a bright light above.

¶ I once waited for a whole week on a height just opposite that glorious range of snow-capped mountains known as the Bernese Alps. I knew they were there, but for a whole week I never caught a glimpse of them. They were enwrapped in clouds the whole time; but one morning the clouds had vanished, and every snowy peak stood out against its blue background with majestic beauty and startling clearness. I recalled that verse in the Psalms. 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people.' Round about them even when they cannot discern His presence; even when the clouds hide Him from their vision, as the Jungfrau and her companions were hidden from mine.[1]

3. The cloud is itself a gift of God. Agriculturists will tell you that it is not well to have all sunshine. If they have no clouds and no rain, all their wheat will run to straw. Where would the harvest be without these dull, damp days which the farmer describes as 'fine growing days'? So if we had no experience of darkness, we should run to straw. That is what happens to some men: they have too much prosperity; and it is harder to be true to God in prosperous days than in dark days. The cloudy days are often spiritually 'fine growing days,' when one has to say: 'Before I was afflicted I went astray, but *now* have I kept thy law.'

There came a cloud; it fell in shining showers.

[1] J. G. Mantle.

[1] J. G. Mantle.

Lo! from the earth sprang troops of radiant flowers.

Grief o'er a joyous heart its shadow threw.
Lo! in the darkness love's sweet graces grew.

The golden sun dropped sudden out of sight.
Lo! silver stars made glorious the night.

Death came. The soul, affrighted at its guise,
Was led protesting into Paradise.[1]

4. The cloud will finally break away and be cleared. On this point we have many distinct indications. Thus it coincides with the general analogy of God's works, to look for obscurity first, and light afterward. According to the Scripture account of the creation, there was first a period of complete darkness; then a period of mist and cloud, when the daylight was visible, but not the sun; then the sun beamed out in a clear open sky, which is called, by way of external description, the creation of the sun. How many of the animals begin life at birth with their eyes closed, eyes which are afterward opened to behold the world into which they have come. How many myriads of insects begin their existence underground, emerging afterward from their dark abode to take wings and glitter in the golden light of day. If we observe the manner, too, of our own intellectual discoveries, we shall generally see the inquirer groping long and painfully under a cloud, trying and experimenting with a thousand guesses to no purpose, till finally a thought dawns on him and, behold, the difficulty is solved! At a single flash, so to speak, the light breaks in, and what before was dark is clear and simple as the day. Darkness first and light afterward, that is the law of science universally. By so many and various analogies we are led to expect that the cloud under which we live in things spiritual will finally be lifted and the splendour of eternal glory poured around us. God will pour it in from the whole firmament of His glory. He will open his secret things, open the boundaries of universal order, open His own glorious mind and His eternal purposes.

[1] *Sunday Afternoon Verses* (ed. W. Robertson Nicoll), 13.

¶ In one of the German picture galleries there is a painting called Cloudland. As you enter the gallery you see this great picture hanging before you at the other end. It looks like a huge daub of confused colour, without form or comeliness. There seems an utter absence of design and beauty as you view it from a distance. But as you move towards the picture it begins to take shape, and on coming close to it you are surprised to find that it is a mass of exquisite little cherubs, like those at the head of the canvas in Raphael's Madonna San Sisto. As you stand before it you exclaim, 'What a transformation! How beautiful these cherub faces are!' So it is with many a life. It seems to consist of unrealized ideals, broken expectations, and crushed hopes. But one day we shall view its strange and bewildering events from another point of view, and everything will be seen in its true proportions.[1]

God's Answer.

Job xxxviii. 1.—'Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said. . . .'

And what does He say? Does He answer the questions which Job had been asking? Does He assign a good reason, a sufficient motive, for the inequalities of the human lot? He does nothing of the kind. He does not throw any light whatever on that painful mystery. He simply teaches us that we should not let that mystery pain and perplex us, and hints that it may have a nobler motive and a happier end than we conceive. The argument of the poem is Butler's argument—the argument from analogy. To the perplexed Patriarch, who sits brooding painfully over the dark problems of life, Jehovah points out that equally insoluble mysteries are over his head and under his feet; that he lives and moves and has his being amid them; that, look where he will, he cannot escape them: and that, as he finds them everywhere else, he should expect to find them in human life.

He unfolds before him the immensities and the wonders of the universe, and asks him

[1] J. G. Mantle.

whether he can understand these, or enter into the secret of their origin and creation; and if not, why he should expect to understand the mystery of God's dealings with man. The question is never put in this exact form, but it is left to suggest itself to the mind of the creature. Job is asked if he can explain the origin and method of the world of animate and inanimate things that he sees around him. 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?'

If, God says in effect, if you cannot guess even the secret of life, or matter, or the times and seasons, the order of Nature, or her laws, forbear to dogmatize upon the meaning, the cause, and the purpose of human discipline. 'Flower in the crannied wall,' so one great modern poet has stated the problem—

I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

It is the problem that so nearly wrecked the life and salvation of Job. Until he could understand the 'flower in the crannied wall,' he could not understand the mysteries of God and man. And the conclusion of the whole matter was, 'Be humble because thou canst not know.' And this, you will remember, was the actual effect of the rebuke upon Job. When Jehovah had finished speaking, Job surrendered. 'Then Job answered the Lord, and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.'

The scene of this wondrous narrative belongs to a period separated from us, on any reckoning, by thirty centuries or more. The old problems survive unchanged to this day, and the mystery of evil and of pain is no less of a mystery than it was to the 'man of Uz.' We have to pass through the same bitter experience of wonder, perplexity, doubt, and too often of complaint and rebellion, that Job passed through. We cannot tell why we suffer; or (what to many of us is a far more bitter trial of our faith) why others suffer, when we ourselves, perhaps, are prosperous and in health. For this latter mystery haunts the imagination and chills the faith of many earnest thinkers in the world far more than the pain or adversity that befalls themselves. For one's own suffering brings many comforts with it, and throws many a side-light upon itself, reveals many uses, privileges, and blessings, unsuspected before it came. But when we reflect upon the misery and the suffering of whole nations, or classes of society, from whom we are too remote in circumstances to guess how suffering acts upon them morally, it is then that we are most liable to have our faith in a God of mercy shaken. The vast, vague, unexplored region of poverty, domestic misery, and all the suffering that flows from the laws of Nature and man consciously or unconsciously violated—this lying all around us in the world, brings home to us with terrible force the mysteries of Divine government, and tempts us to 'curse God and die.' To a man whose heart has been made tender by familiar association with the spirit of a more perfect revelation of God than was vouchsafed to Job, the sufferings of those of whom he knows little or nothing is a harder problem than his own. The area of our perplexity is widened with the growing area of our outlook upon human life. Even though we are free from the exasperating effect of three such misleading counsellors as were Job's, we have, on the other hand, a larger stock of mysteries to face. The problem of Divine government has to be worked out upon a far larger area than the small field of our own personal welfare or disaster. But the answer that was given to Job, if it satisfied his doubts and removed his misgivings, is still the answer to our wider range of difficulty. Still, if we cannot understand the mysteries of the world's origin and arrangement, how dare we pronounce on the mystery of pain?

This is the argument of the Divine answer, so far as it has an argument; and even this is suggested rather than stated. And it does not solve the problems over which we brood; it only points us to other problems equally difficult, equally insoluble. It does not even affirm, it only hints, that the end of all these mysteries may be a good end, an end of mercy and grace. There is enough for faith to think over and to rest upon, but there is no clear satisfying answer for doubt; there is enough to nourish the heart, but not enough to convince the intellect and stop the mouth of gainsayers. We are not told—much as we long to know it—why God permits evil to exist, or why He permits it to take so many painful and apparently injurious forms for the righteous. We are simply invited to trust in the God whom we have found to be good, and to believe that out of evil itself He will educe a greater good. God does not argue with us, or seek to force our trust; for trust and love are not to be forced, but won. You cannot force even your own child to love and confide in you. All you can do is to surround him with an atmosphere of kindness, to show him that you are worthy of his confidence and affection. When you have done your best and utmost, he may abuse your confidence and repay your kindness with a thoughtless ingratitude. It may be necessary that he should go out into the world, and discover its coldness, its selfishness, its indifference, before he can learn to value your tenderness and repay your love with love. And it is thus with us and God. He is good, and gentle, and kind. But we are wilful, careless, ungrateful. In His wisdom and kindness He sends us out to contend against the adversities of life; He permits us to serve the sinful passions we love more than we love Him, that we may find how cruel and degrading a bondage their service is. The 'tempest' sweeps through our darkened heaven, through our darkened hearts, strewing them with wrecks: and *now*, if the kind, tender Voice speak to us out of the tempest with an unalterable affection, if the conviction comes to us that God is our Father and loves us, our love springs to meet the love of our Father in heaven; we wait for no arguments, we ask no proofs; it is enough that our Father speaks to us once more, that He loves us still, that He rejoices over us as we bow in penitence and renewed affection before Him.

So the final argument is the will of God. 'In His will stands our peace.' Thus might be summed up the moral of the story of Job. As long as God's will was misinterpreted by the three friends there was no peace for them or for him; as long as it was resented by Job, though he did not attempt to account for it, there was no peace. When once he accepted the truth that God had His purpose, and that purpose to make perfect through obedience, the curse was removed. When the sufferer was able, in effect, to cry, 'Thy will be done,' his restoration to happiness had begun.

I struck the board, and cry'd, 'No more;
I will abroad.'
What, shall I ever sigh and pine?
My lines and life are free; free as the rode,
Loose as the winds, as large as store.
Shall I be still in suit?
Have I no harvest but a thorn
To let me bloud, and not restore
What I have lost with cordiall fruit?
Sure there was wine
Before my sighs did drie it; there was corn
Before my tears did drown it.
Is the yeare onely lost to me?
Have I no bayes to crown it,
No flowers, no garlands gay? all blasted,
All wasted?
Not so, my heart; but there is fruit,
And thou hast hands.
Recover all thy sigh-blown age
On double pleasures; leave thy cold dispute
Of what is fit and not; forsake thy cage,
Thy rope of sands,
Which pettie thoughts have made; and made to thee
Good cable, to enforce and draw,
And be thy law,
While thou didst wink and wouldst not see.
Away! take heed;
I will abroad.
Call in thy death's-head there, tie up thy fears;

He that forbears
To suit and serve his need
Deserves his load.
But as I rav'd and grew more fierce and wilde
At every word,
Me thought I heard one calling, 'Childe';
And I reply'd, 'My Lord.' [1]

The Ministry of Nature.

Job xxxviii. 4.—'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?'

This is the first of many questions which the Almighty addresses to Job. The Patriarch cried out for an answer to his perplexities. God sends him to Nature. There is not a syllable about Job or his sorrow, not a word that acknowledges his integrity or commends his patience, not a ray of light upon the particular grief that is breaking his indignant heart, not a solitary allusion to the problems of the moral world that have been discussed with such vehemence by him and his friends, not a hint of another world in which the wrongs of this will be righted and its sorrows comforted for evermore. Instead of the consolation and the vindication with which he had dreamed his heavenly Friend would soothe his wounded heart, there is hurled out of the whirlwind a volley of ironical questions which have nothing to do with him or his grief, or even with human life at all, but which gather around the mysterious processes of Nature—the steadiness of the earth, the movement of the sea, the invisible sources of the snow, the rain, the hail.

Gird up now thy loins like a man;
For I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Declare, if thou hast understanding.

It seems cruel of the great Friend thus to overwhelm the broken-hearted man who had appealed to Him so confidently. What does it all mean?

[1] George Herbert.

1. For one thing, it means that, in perplexity or sorrow, it is good for us to get away from ourselves—'to forget ourselves,' as one has said, 'in the glorious creation of which we form a part.' Job desperately appeals to God for a revelation of Himself and for light upon his misery; and, for answer, God passes before him the splendid panorama of creation—of earth, and sky, and sea, with the wild and happy things that are therein. To a broken heart, such an answer may seem a very mockery; but it is God's own answer, and it means, at the least, that so long as we have eyes for nothing but our problems, the problems will remain. If we do not solve them, we can at least forget them, by looking away to the wonders of the immeasurable universe.

The world is a mystery which we have to accept without being able to explain; and this was doubtless one of the lessons which the panorama of Nature was designed to bring home to the desolate soul of Job. Mystery, mystery, on the right hand and on the left! If he could not answer the simplest questions that could be asked about the familiar phenomena of the natural world, how could he hope to understand the infinitely more intricate problems that gather about the moral world and human life? Our problem, frightful as it is when looked at by itself, shrivels almost into insignificance when seen against that background of infinite mystery. Ours is but a little bit of the mystery in which the whole universe is enwrapped, and before which it is wisdom to bow in silence.

¶ 'The provision of infinity in Nature,' says Mark Rutherford, 'is an immense help to me. No man can look up to the stars at night and reflect upon what lies behind them without feeling that the tyranny of the senses is loosened. The beyond and the beyond, turn it over as we may, is a constant visible warning not to make our minds the measure of the universe. This understanding of ours, whose function it seems to be to imprison us, is manifestly limited.' And, in his *Autobiography*, the stars appear to have been ever his comforters. On one occasion he is oppressed by the conviction—the most distres-

sing and unmanning of all the convictions that sometimes seize us—the conviction that there is nothing in him. He walks beneath the stars, and feels that, in a universe of such inconceivable immensity, there is room for every creature born, and, therefore, a place for him. 'I sought refuge in the idea of God, the God of a starry night with its incomprehensible distances; and I was at peace, content to be the meanest worm of all the millions that crawl upon the earth.' Again, he is aflame with anger, He strolls beneath the stars, and, 'reflecting on the great idea of God, and on all that it implies, his animosities are softened and his heat against his brother is cooled.' On a third occasion he is worried almost to death, and utterly disheartened. 'But just before I reached home the clouds rolled off with the south-west wind into detached, fleecy masses, separated by liquid blue gulfs, in which were sowed the stars. The effect upon me was what that sight, thank God, always has been—a sense of the infinite extinguishing all mean cares.' [1]

2. But the majestic speech of the Almighty, which suggests that the universe is a mystery, suggests also that it is an orderly mystery. Behind it is Mind. Its phenomena do not happen in any order, they happen in a particular order; their sequence can be depended upon. Its God is a God of order, not of confusion. Through the centuries this order has run inexorably on—seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat, day and night—and this will continue while the earth remaineth.

In spite of the mystery that baffles and besets us behind and before, the world of which we form a part is a world in which things are in their places. The sea and the land have each their bounds assigned them.

> Who shut up the sea with doors . . .
> And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further;
> And here shall thy proud waves be stayed?

The sea is not allowed to overwhelm and devastate the land. In the physical world things are where they should be, and will it not also be so in the world of human life? Sorrow has its place, like the sea, but no more than the sea will it be allowed to work wreck and ruin. 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.'

The world in which we live is therefore a world whose order we have a right to trust. It is full of meaning and purpose. And as we watch the unfailing regularity with which its great processes go on; as we think of the Mind by which they are directed, and the unweary everlasting arms upon which they are sustained, we too shall find something of that quiet order which pervades the universe enter and take possession of our own souls, as we begin to trust that infinite Mind and to lean with all our weight upon those mighty arms.

3. But in the mystery by which we are surrounded there is more than order; there is love. The system of things is not cruel or indifferent; it is an order at the heart of which is love. Surely this thought was never expressed with more tenderness or beauty than in the lines

> He causes it to rain on a land where no man is;
> On the wilderness, wherein there is no man;
> To satisfy the waste and desolate ground;
> And to cause the tender grass to spring forth.

The God who lavishes His love even upon the desolate and waste ground will surely not forget His men and women with their waste and desolated hearts. The great poet who gave us this immortal book does not actually say so, indeed he deliberately avoids saying so,—for in these speeches he persistently keeps our eyes turned away from human life and its problems—but that is what he means. If God cares for the wilderness, will He not also care for the man? If He pours His love even upon the place *where no man is,* He can surely be trusted to remember the places where men are. It is the Old Testament anticipation of the words of Jesus: 'If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you?' As has been well said, the solution offered here is one 'which does not solve

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Silver Shadow,* 81.

the perplexity, but buries it under the tide of a fuller life and joy in God.'

Even this ancient poet, who very keenly felt the mystery that lies about the world and human life, yet learned from Nature that it was not an unilluminated mystery—that it was lit up by the love of God. He saw that love shining in the most unlikely places, and he had faith to believe that it shines always and everywhere, whether men have eyes to see it or not. We do not always see it plainly; but we see Jesus, we know Him and what He is; and the Mind that is behind the universe is the same mind that was in Him.[1]

¶ G. F. Watts has a famous picture called *The All-pervading*. It shows a figure with great encircling wings, seated and holding in its lap a globe representing the stellar universe. 'Think of it! The whole universe a jewelled globe in the strong, caressing touch of these fingers! How strong and capable the fingers are! And how that utterance of a Jewish singer of sweet songs flashes at once into the mind, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers!" Behind this great winged figure, circle upon circle, rainbow-hued, indicates the vast sweep of other systems in the fathomless depths of space, and seated in the midst is this gracious Being, grasping our universe, and surrounded by infinitely vaster universes of which but the faintest suggestions come to us, the fingers touching our own illimitable system of stars, the tips of the wings reaching to the infinite beyond. Does this All-pervading Presence care for this jewelled globe? In other words, has God set in motion the infinite multitude of the starry hosts and left them to whirl on through space and through eternity as they may, or does He for ever watch and guide and control? The answer of the picture is unmistakable. How gracious is the expression upon this face! With what tender, fixed gaze these eyes bend their glance upon this globe! With what delicate touch these fingers handle it, as if to ensure that every part of its marvellous mechanism should be in perfect order! A sermon has been published on the Mother-love of God. It is here. The hands are the strong, workmanlike hands of a man, but behind this brooding face is the tender compassion of a woman.

Infinite Power, Infinite Wisdom—must we not shrink before it? Yes, indeed, but for that further revelation which comes through Jesus Christ, that the God who controls these mighty orbs whirling through incalculable orbits in infinite space marks also the sparrow that falls at our feet. The supreme religion of all is that which teaches that to Infinite Power and Infinite Wisdom Infinite Love is added.'[1]

[1] J. E. McFadyen, *The City with Foundations*, 148ff.

Music and Worship.

Job xxxviii. 7.—'When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.'

From the beginning of time music has been the chosen medium through which humanity has given expression to its tidal waves of supreme joy or its measureless depths of passion and of woe. Creation itself was ushered in with the most thrilling strains of supernatural music. We are told that when the foundations of the earth were laid 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' From that moment in creation when the brooks went singing down the hillsides of Eden, and the birds made glad the dawn of time with their thrilling melodies, music has had an indisputable place in the world.

Christianity was born with a song upon its lips. Mary sang in the wonderful measures of the Magnificat; angels sang in their jubilant hallelujah chorus, and the shepherds sang in the strains of a devout ecstasy. The Church of Christ has been singing ever since. Paganism does not sing: it laments. Pagodas and mosques do not lighten their sombre interiors with music, but every Christian Church, however humble, is a conservatory of sweetest music.

Music has been defined as love in search of a word. There is in the heart of man an inexpressible something which seeks to define itself in speech; but, failing in this, music

[1] H. W. Shrewsbury, *Visions of an Artist*, 36, 35.

flies to his relief, and in melody man pours out his imprisoned soul. The deeper the soul life, the more one is conscious of feeling beyond the limitations of articulate utterance. In the attempt of the finite soul to praise and glorify the Infinite all earthly devices of language utterly fail, and music alone enables man to sing what he can not express—his adoration and gratitude to his great God and King. Consequently, wherever religion is the sincerest, music will be the purest, because it is the echo of God's voice in the soul of man.

Schopenhauer says that music is the shower bath of the soul washing away all that is impure. Have we not, when listening to some wonderful production of the great masters, some grand oratorio or sweet soul-stirring symphony, felt a spiritual uplift that has carried us beyond the limits of time and space, even into the realms of immortality, and aroused a longing within us to be as pure in heart and soul as is the body when physically cleansed from its earth stains? That is the way many a prodigal has felt when, wandering in a far country away from God and home, spending his all in riotous living, he has chanced suddenly to hear some familiar but long-forgotten strain of sweet, compelling music, reminding him of the hymns he sang or heard sung by the dear mother in the long ago of his childhood.

What is the real secret of the power that lies in the beautiful gospel hymns to bring comfort to the afflicted, peace to the troubled heart, and repentance to the erring soul? Sometimes when we have gone to the house of God on the Sabbath day, perplexed in mind, depressed with care and anxiety, the choir has chanted some wonderful promise of the Father that has instantly made a rift in the dark clouds, or the soloist has sung in tender, sympathetic tones, 'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by,' and the weight of care drops off as if by magic as we seem to feel that nail-pierced hand resting in loving sympathy upon our shoulder and meet that glance of comforting assurance that all will yet be well, for the Master Himself will work for and with us. We see then that true religion, like true love, is emotional and music is the most adequate expression of the emotional faculty. Faith sings, unbelief never. Music reveals God.

When Handel was writing the Hallelujah Chorus he said, 'I saw all heaven open before me, and the great God Himself appeared.' Haydn said: 'When I was occupied with the Creation, always before I sat down to the piano I prayed God with earnestness that He would enable me to praise Him worthily.' The greatest musicians have been good men, and to develop the mighty impulses which they have felt in their souls they have chosen lofty, divine themes. This was true of Beethoven, whose soulful sonatas have won for him a genuine priesthood of the emotions. It was true of Mozart, whose thirty-five years gave to the world such treasures from the infinite that he is actually exhaustless; and of Liszt, for during the days of his best work the book, the *Imitation of Christ,* by Thomas à Kempis, was his constant companion.

It is evident, then, that, like his Maker, man is a spirit. It is also evident that the infinite God is more perfectly worshipped with music than in any other way, because it opens up the vistas of faith through which can be seen the King in His beauty. That is the reason why all great revivals of religion have been accompanied with revivals in sacred song. Ay, even as we reach heaven, where the present conclusions of men shall be abandoned for the completer revelation of all the truth of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, we shall find that music, which was never anything but divine in its nature and influence, shall be our old familiar friend, increasing in divinity as our own evolving souls are permitted to comprehend and participate in that divinity in the heaven and through the eternal life that is to come. John, the beloved disciple, had a foretaste of that when, an exile in Patmos in the midst of the boundless sea, there was given him, in his awful loneliness and isolation, a vision of the New Jerusalem such as never before or since has been granted to living man. After describing the inconceivable glories of that paradise of God he tells us, 'And I heard the voice of harpers

harping with their harps, and they sung as it were a new song before the throne; and no man could sing that song but they which are redeemed from earth.' So as the curtain rises on creation's dawn to the exultant singing of a choir invisible, it falls in John's beatific vision to the accompaniment of golden harps played by the angelic orchestra.[1]

¶ Church music is the general utterance of the melodiousness, the joy, the poetry of religion. And second, it is the special means by which a special truth is fastened on the soul, and a special duty made winning and authoritative. . . . When a great congregation is to praise the Lord and to learn truth and duty by the melody of song, I for one should be sorry to have it lose either of the two exaltations, either that which comes of the great, simple, sublime utterance of its own emotion, or that which comes from listening while voices which the Lord has filled with the gold and silver of His choicest and most mysterious harmony reveal to us the full beauty of truth and the full sweetness and sacredness of duty.[2]

Who would have thought that even an idle song
Were such a holy and celestial thing
That wickedness and envy cannot sing—
That music for no moment lives with wrong?
I know this, for a very grievous throng,
Dark thoughts, low wishes, round my bosom cling,
And, underneath, the hidden holy spring
Stagnates because of their enchantment strong.

Blow, breath of heaven, on all this poison blow!
And, heart, glow upward to this gracious breath!
Between them, vanish, mist of sin and death,
And let the life of life within me flow!
Love is the green earth, the celestial air,
And music runs like dews and rivers there![3]

[1] A. J. Meyer, in *The Homiletic Review*, Sept. 1922, p. 243f.
[2] *Phillips Brooks*, 307. [3] George MacDonald.

The Command of the Morning.

Job xxxviii. 12.—'Hast thou commanded the morning?'

THE Book of Job is one of the world's great epics, where the whole problem of human sin and sorrow, the mystery of the ways of God, is unfolded in the most dramatic form. The great scheme, however, often overshadows the extraordinary touches of poetic insight which appear in the least details. Consider, for instance, this passing allusion to the work of the morning. 'Hast thou,' the poem says, 'commanded the morning?' Have you, that is to say, taken possession of the new day and become its master, so that the morning shall be a servant who is at your command? And what is to give one the command of the morning?

1. We live in an age when the freshest hours of the day, if not actually despised, are mostly regarded with indifference. There is a marked tendency to lengthen the day at the wrong end. The habit of the late hour is cultivated. Frequently the new day is born before men are settled for the night. Consequently, there is a growing disinclination for early rising. The hours of sleep are made to encroach upon the hours intended for work. The morning hymn of Bishop Ken,

> Awake, my soul, and *with the sun*
> Thy daily stage of duty run;

is fast falling into disuse. Few men feel they can sing it without hypocrisy. We lie abed too late, and we lose our command of the morning.

But we are all able to recall some fugitive occasion when a sudden and unaccountable spurt of energy got us early out of bed, and when the experience was so strangely refreshing that we solemnly pledged ourselves to repeat it. That day is still a fragrant memory. It was one of those rare occasions when we had time enough to do everything expected of us, and then had a little to spare. Seldom have we passed through the daily routine with greater ease and credit. Never did any work-

ing day contain so many hours. We were able to face every duty with a calm composure. That day, at least, passed to its account with fewer regrets for neglected opportunity, and fewer outbursts of irritable temper, than our usual days are wont to show. That day our judgments were large and magnanimous; our spirits were high and romantic; our outlook was bright and optimistic. No claim upon our interest and thought found us unprepared. We felt ourselves on the very top of life. For once in a while we commanded the morning.

¶ William Law, in his 'Serious Call,' wrote, 'I take it for granted that every Christian that is in health is up early in the morning; for it is much more reasonable to suppose a person up early because he is a Christian than because he is a labourer, or a tradesman, or a servant, or has business that wants him!' The saying is very quaint. It may be that Law was fully justified in taking such a thing for granted in his time, but it would be highly unwarrantable to make any such general presumption to-day. It would be far nearer the truth to suppose he was going to catch a train, or to fetch a doctor. It is only some extraordinary event that stirs us early. We lie in bed to the last minute. Has not this loss of the morning caused us to suffer in our own spiritual lives? The late hour at which we retire to bed at night is the cause of the late hour at which we rise from bed in the morning. We have reckoned to a nicety the shortest time in which we can swallow our breakfast, rush out of the house, and catch our tram or train into the city. This has led to the hasty and, frequently, parrot-like repetition of our morning prayers, and, in many instances, their complete abandonment. Thus our spiritual resources have been impoverished. We face the day with scant equipment because we face it alone. We know the trials of endurance, of patience, and of moral courage which each day await us, but we are content to take risks. If we return at nightfall with no stain of dishonour the credit does not lie with us. Our own spiritual strength has been sapped, our powers of endurance have been weakened, our personal courage has waned, our very standing as Christians has sometimes been imperilled, because we have lost command of the morning.[1]

2. Now the most successful men in every great calling of life have been those who have made themselves masters of the morning. Ask any man of affairs, and he will tell you that his business has prospered because, early in life, he learned how to improve the time. While others were sleeping, his brain and hands were busy. His feet made the first track through the snow at daybreak. He made the morning his servant to command. Ask the scholar whose learning has become his priceless crown, and he will tell you that the foundation of his knowledge was laid in the early stillness of the morning, when few people were astir and distraction was impossible. Ask the writer who has carved for himself a niche in the temple of fame, and he will tell you that his most original work was done in

'The solemn hush of Nature newly born,'

and when no sound save the morning song of the birds broke the quiet. But we need not cite the unusual, or turn to the great for our examples. All the world knows that the most successful and sweet-tempered housewife is the one who has broken the back of her work by noon. Whatever calling we may follow, be it high or low, the secret of efficiency lies in obtaining a strong command of the morning.

¶ Talking once of early rising, it was mentioned that it was far more difficult to get up early when young than later in life; and his answer was, 'Don't I know that very well, for I could only overcome the difficulty myself by not going to bed at all: I used not to undress, but rolled myself in a thick dressing-gown, and lay on the floor of my studio, sometimes on two chairs, until I had taught myself to awake and get up with the sun.' The habit once acquired was never lost. In his eighty-eighth year, as soon as daylight permitted he rose and set to work. If he was ill and obliged to remain in bed, he would generally ask to have the curtains and blinds closed,

[1] W. Gilbert.

once explaining, 'I cannot bear it, the light calls to me.'[1]

3. And if this is true of secular pursuits, still more is it true of those higher and more important reaches of the spiritual life. It is less foolish to start the day's work without breakfast than it is to start without prayer. Mr. A. C. Benson describes how once, while staying at an old house, he was wakened early in the morning by the 'soft murmur of an organ,' and 'the low, sweet singing' of a beautiful hymn. The words, though not found in many collections, were quite familiar to him, and immediately set in motion a train of reflection. Thus he concludes, 'It seemed to me, too, a beautiful and desirable thing to begin the day thus, with a delicate hallowing of the hours; to put one gentle thought into the heart, perfumed by the sweet music.' Sir John Lubbock regarded it as an essential provision of a well ordered life that it should be shut up for one hour every day for peaceful meditation. Another writer divided the day as follows:—

Six hours in sleep, in law's grave study six,
Four spent in prayer—the rest on Nature fix.

But it is not wise to be dominated by any such clockwork morality. The exigencies of our modern life are such that we can seldom plan out our days to the tick of the clock. But we shall all feel the truth of Drummond's remark that 'Ten minutes spent in Christ's society every day, aye, two minutes, if it be face to face and heart to heart, will make the whole life different.' We cannot, however, get this time, nor all the strength-giving inspiration which it brings, unless we learn what it means to command the morning.[2]

The Lessons of the Morning.

Job xxxviii. 12.—'Hast thou commanded the morning?'

The morning has two lessons to teach, both of which we must grasp before we can become masters of the day. The writer of the Book of Job, with his keen poetic insight, reveals them in the passage before us.

1. First, says the poet, the morning is to take hold of the ends of the earth and shake the wicked out of it. The metaphor reminds one of the cleanly housewife gathering up the hearthrug from the parlour floor, taking it out into the garden, and there shaking it clean from all accumulated dust of the previous day. So the morning is the divinely-appointed time when we may shake ourselves free from all the dust and dirt which have clung to us, and the sin which doth so easily beset us. This exercise is not something which we may either observe or ignore, as the fit takes us, without its making any difference to life.

It was while Milton lived at Horton that he made up his mind to become a great poet. There and then he solemnly dedicated his life to the poetical office. He realized that a 'poet's soul must contain the perfect shape of all things good, and wise, and just. His body must be spotless and without blemish, his life pure, his thoughts high, his studies intense.' But such a consecration is required in every calling, and not only in the realm of poetry, before we can put forth our highest and best. There is no task too lowly for consecration to hallow and illumine. If we would 'be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might'; if we desire that our work should attain distinction, we must meet God early in the day. We must shake ourselves free from the dust of sin as God shakes the darkness from the earth, and begin each day afresh. We must pray:

Lord, I my vows to Thee renew;
Disperse my sins as morning dew;
Guard my first springs of thought and will,
And with Thyself my spirit fill.

That is the first great step towards commanding the morning.

2. The second thought of Job is that the morning is plastic, like clay in the hands of the potter, which, under proper treatment, can be moulded into all kinds of useful and beautiful forms. Or again, the new-born day

[1] M. S. Watts, *George Frederic Watts*, i. 24.
[2] W. Gilbert.

is like wax, which our first thoughts and deeds stamp with a definite seal. The night is fluid. In sleep we neither transmit impressions to, nor receive them from, the outside world. But every morning we start life afresh. We begin to live over again. Then is the time 'to stamp the day with a specific intention, and to determine what mark it shall bear.' Now, when a man begins the day with prayerful dedication, he is sealing its moments for God; he is giving it definite purpose and high distinction. Coming straight from the presence of the Almighty, he is able to face his duty with a new alertness, a fresh precision, and a renewed confidence and strength. And these are the marks of the man who commands the morning.

When first thy eyes unveil, give thy soul leave
To do the like; our bodies but forerun
The spirit's duty; true hearts spread and heave
Unto their God, as flowers do to the sun:
Give Him thy first thoughts then, so shalt thou keep
Him company all day, and in Him sleep.[1]

The Waterflood.

Job xxxviii. 25.—'Who hath cleft a channel for the waterflood?' (RV).

What a fascination there is about a high tide! We love to see the triumphant march, to hear the shout of many waters, to watch the foaming flood fill to the brim ocean's rocky cup, to mark the silver gleam far inland on river and streamlet, telling of ocean's unspent energy. It is indeed a glorious sight.

That there are similar tides 'in the affairs of men' the greatest of poets noted long ago. Occasionally, or it may be only once, men are signally favoured by happy conjunctions of circumstances which send them bounding to a coveted haven. The politician achieves an extraordinary popularity, and exults that the flowing tide is with him. Commercial men fondly recall years when the ships they sent for gold steadily and swiftly returned with propitious wind and wave. Intellectual men are conscious of seasons of rare power and elevation, of times when they are filled with the wine of imagination; the flood-gates of the brain are opened, and it is rapture to sing, to write, and to paint. Our immortal pictures, symphonies, epics, orations, discoveries, are the shining jewels left by high tides. Usually the currents of life are sluggish. We creep along only as we strain at the oar, we are often aground. But ever and anon the fountains of the great deep are broken up: the monotonous ripple of commonplace life ceases, and we float proudly on a swelling sea 'whose foam is amber and whose gravel gold.'

There are hours and days when God comes specially near to us, as there are seasons when sun and moon approach the earth, creating a majestic gathering of the waters. At those wonderful periods of spiritual visitation doubts are dissolved; we see clearly what at other times we miss or see but darkly; we conceive the thoughts and form the purposes which give new nobility to life; we shout and sing what hitherto we were only able to stammer; we easily attain ideals whose beauty has long tantalized us from afar; and instead of being worn and weary in the path of duty, we run with exhaustless energy.

There is to the uninstructed mind much that is mysterious and inexplicable in the influence of the stars upon the tides which flow on our coasts, in consequence of the numerous complications—astronomical, meteorological, and geographical—which obscure the laws governing the tides. The greatest philosophers find it difficult, nay, impossible, to explain to the average man the wonderful phenomenon. The action of the eternal world upon our spirit is a still greater mystery, which none may comprehend or explain; but every spiritual man is assured of the fact, and has felt the rapture of extraordinary visitations of grace, when tides of spiritual influence surge through his heart and mind, making everything to live, move, and bloom.

1. How precious are those days when God draws nigh to us, and our spirit is deeply moved! These rising and falling tides of

[1] H. Vaughan.

emotion are in many ways most blessed. A soul like a duck-pond is not the ideal state; our grandest days are those when mysterious effluences course through every artery of our being. They are days of purification. The mud and débris which would otherwise choke our rivers are cleansed by high tides, and the garbage of our great cities, which ordinary tides float up and down the river day after day, is carried hence by the extraordinary flood and lost in the depths. So the visitations of grace cleanse our nature, carrying health and purity into all its channels, and bearing away evil and unwholesome things.

2. These high tides of blessing serve in another way: they free us from various injurious moods and habits which arise in ordinary life and which with ordinary grace we find almost impossible to overcome. In a tideless sea it is most difficult to prevent a bar at a river's mouth from silting up; but the majestic sweep of the spring tide washes out all sediment and leaves only the great deep profound. Ways of thinking and acting, habits and associations that circumscribe us, that render us shallow, that may prove occasions of stagnation and shipwreck, are easily broken through and destroyed when a great tide of life surges through the soul. These days of spiritual effluxion are also days of power and attainment. What intellectual men strive after in vain during neap tides they reach splendidly in moments of inspiration; and so the spiritual man without toiling or rowing reaches high beliefs and perfections in those glorious hours when the hand of God is upon him for good. Pentecostal times are high-water marks, when the believer, letting himself go, is carried into higher, wider, and more satisfying experiences and attributes.

We cannot command these seasons; if we fail to improve them we cannot recall them. When 'the set time to favour Zion' is come, there are unmistakable signs of the present Lord; when the 'set time' to favour any soul is come, there are solemn and yet delightful agitations within that soul. Let us be tremulously alive to these tides which bear us out to God. If we are busy here and there, the Spirit will be gone and the infinite blessings of the full sea lost. Those are sad hours in which the heavenlies are a long way off, and the streams of thought and emotion are sluggish and turbid; but we know the joy of paradise when the fulness of the blessing fills our soul as the waters cover the bed of the sea, and when it overflows our lips with praise as the brimming flood sings among the shells and pebbles of the beach.[1]

I look not forward or backward: the abysses of time are nought.
From pole to pole of the heavens I pass in a flash of thought.
I clasp the world to my bosom: I feel its pulse in my breast,—
The pulse of measureless motion, the pulse of fathomless rest.
Is it motion or rest that thrills me? Is it lightning or moonlit peace?
Am I freer than waves of ether, or prisoned beyond release?
I know not; but through my spirit, within me, around, above,
The world-wide river is streaming, the river of life and love.
Silent, serene, eternal, passionless, perfect, pure;—
I may not measure its windings, but I know its aim is sure.
In its purity seethes all passion: in its silence resounds all song:
Its strength is builded of weakness: its right is woven of wrong.
I am borne afar on its bosom; yet its source and its goal are mine,
From the sacred springs of Creation to the ocean of love Divine.
I have ceased to think or to reason: there is nothing to ponder or prove:
I hope, I believe no longer: I am lost in a dream of love.[2]

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *Studies in Christian Character, Work, and Experience*, ii. 138ff.
[2] E. G. A. Holmes.

The Sight of God the Sight of Self.

Job xlii. 5, 6.—'Now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself.'

Once before Job had said, 'My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live' (xxvii. 6). When we compare the two assertions we are struck with the contrast between them. That contrast is not to be explained at all by the character of the speaker, as if he were a hasty, fitful, unstable person who did not know his own mind from one hour to another, and were ready on slight inducement to unsay his sayings. The explanation lies in the great difference of the light which fell upon the subject-matter at two different times; the light in which, at first and then at last, Job saw himself.

1. The earlier assertion was made when Job had only human light to read his heart by. We remember the position; and certainly we shall be slow to judge Job severely as we do so. Nay, we shall be wise not to judge him at all, remembering, as someone has well said, that we, so ready to criticize our brethren, are not only not seated on the judicial bench, but not even summoned to the jury-box. We remember with sympathy and reverence, in Job's case, how terrific were his trials, how utterly inexplicable (except behind the veil which hid from him the action alike of God and of Satan) were his accumulated sufferings, and how exquisitely trying to his lacerated spirit was the line taken by his friends. Still, not as judges but as reverent observers, we have before us the fact that he took up an attitude of energetic self-vindication, a tone of indignant self-assertion. In the light merely of man upon man he saw himself as a being pure of purpose, true of heart, just and kind. The baseless insinuations of his friends, who assumed that he had done some foul concealed sin, spurred him by reaction into the extremest language of self-satisfaction. He was righteous; he was good; he had nothing to confess; his heart should 'not reproach him as long as he lived.'

There was a sense in which he was right. His friends did grossly mistake him. In respect of their opinion, he had reason in saying he was virtuous. Only in so doing he ran the tremendous risk of forgetting that there was another point of view, another kind of light; the light of a human standard was too dim to tell him *all* about himself.

2. Then at last, as the wonderful story works itself out, another light is let in upon him. Not Zophar, or Eliphaz, or even Elihu, but Jehovah speaks to Job. Very remarkable is the way in which the book represents His action on His servant's conscience. He speaks very little, if at all, about Job's moral imperfection. He simply reveals to Job His own Divine glory as the omnipotent Creator: Maker and Master of Creation, Cause of all existence in the world. He draws His disciple's eyes upward from self to attempt to gaze on Him in the inscrutable yet radiant majesty of His sovereign will. Then Job breaks down; he belies his misguided estimate of his own goodness, and 'abhors' himself.

We must not, indeed, think that Job was convinced of sin by the mere, solitary, isolated, realization of the omnipotence of God. No; he knew God already, in a deep experience, as just and holy. The convicting power lay in this, that the great Revealer so showed His absolute Creatorship to Job as to cast a new and awful consciousness upon him that God's justice and holiness were absolute and infinite, as the moral attributes of a Being absolute and infinite in the mysterious power to cause and to maintain the world.

It was the light of the Lord that showed Job himself, and brought him to his knees, and drew that word of self-abhorrence from his mouth, and then 'stopped' that mouth in penitent silence at last.

3. The light of Creation still shines, but that light is grown pale before the glory of Redemption. And the question for us to-day is, Are we looking for this? Is our place held with patient wistfulness near to this holiest sanctuary of God, until there shall shine into our hearts the light of the knowledge of the

glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? And when it does shine, what then? It will be as it was with Job when the word out of the whirlwind had opened before his soul some Presence of God; 'I abhor myself . . . for now mine eye seeth thee.' It will be as it was with Isaiah when in his vision he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, and heard the seraphim saying one to another, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts;' 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.' It will be as it was with Peter when that strange draught of fishes discovered to him in Jesus a tremendous fact which before he had not dreamed of, and made him say, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'

Those men saw God; and in seeing Him they saw themselves. And this is most certain, that no one has ever seen himself, or will ever see himself, except in the light of God. That light discovers sin. Nothing else can. No words are needed; the light is enough.

¶ A young Anglican clergyman spent some hours with Dr. Whyte on the West Coast; and the following is his most sharply cut recollection of their talk together. He asked whether it was not possible here and now to be sanctified and kept free from sin, and quoted the testimony of a friend whose surrender had been so complete as to enable him to say that sometimes for days together he had not consciously disobeyed God. 'No, sir,' was Dr. Whyte's reply, 'no man who knows what God is would say a thing like that—no man who has seen the exquisite holiness of God would say a thing like that.' The speaker's eyes seemed to open with intense clearness and certainty as he spoke of that 'exquisite holiness of God.'[1]

The Vision of God.

Job xlii. 5.—'Now mine eye seeth thee.'

This great book has a great ending. It has shown us Job, a righteous man on whom affliction after affliction innocently falls, writhing in the darkness beneath the hand of God. His tempestuous moods ring the whole gamut of human misery. In bewildering succession they rush across his sky like dark clouds driven by the hurricane, but now and then in moments of high intuition they part and give passing glimpses of serene sky. Exhaustion follows on excitement, and utterance relieves the tension of his soul. Then, in pictures of exquisite beauty, there passes before him the unsearchable wisdom of God in those works of His that mock man's power to imitate or understand. Exalted by the wonder of the pageant he forgets his suffering, his indignation, his despair, his very self, and, bowing before God's majesty, he cries:—

I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;
But now mine eye seeth thee,
Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent
In dust and ashes.

Spiritual peace and satisfaction found by a storm-tossed soul in the contemplation of the majesty of God and all that that entails: such is the great ending of this great book.

The wonder is that in so narrow a setting it reaches a solution so large and so true as to be still the sum of all life's wisdom. The setting was narrow in two respects. The vision of God that came to Job was like the western sky with a vapourless atmosphere from which the sun has departed. Spaces of clear, cold light shine through an exquisite chequer-work of pearly clouds, but there is no glowing glory of flaming fire. God's righteousness cannot yet be uttered in the one word love, much less such wonderful love as is told by the words: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.' And, again, Job has no assured conviction of eternal life. In one inspired moment, indeed, he seems to feel that righteousness must be so supreme in God that the injustice of his present innocent suffering necessitates another life, in which his integrity shall be made clear. But the passage is susceptible of another rendering more consistent with the context; and even if Job caught a glimpse of this high consequence of God's goodness, it was only

[1] G. F. Barbour, *Alexander Whyte*, 532.

a momentary glimpse; for the argument makes no pause, as if at last its corner-stone had been discovered, nor does it build upon and around it, but moves on unaffected. The more wonderful, then, that this great ending of a great book could declare with unfaltering voice that in the vision of God and the strength of it, the vision of God and the joy of it, the vision of God and the invincible faith that comes of it, there is that which can satisfy the hardest driven soul and bring it peace.

1. Note, first, that the solution is not a speculative but a practical one. It is no intellectual formula that explains the mystery of God's ways. The solution is found in a state of soul, an attitude of Job's spirit to God. Into the depths of his soul God's light shone. The heart was won by it, the will constrained. Out of heart and will light spread upward into the mind. Its restless questionings were not stilled to silence, but they lost their querulousness and unbelief.

As with Job, so still with us the solution of life's ultimate problem must be a practical one. In reaching it our whole spiritual being must co-operate. It is to be found, not in thinking alone, or in feeling alone, or in willing, but in all of them together, that is to say, in living. It was as a man, and playing the man, that Job found peace and found God; and so must we. Mere intellect will never solve life's problems. Life is too rich and full to be comprehended by intellect alone. We understand life through the heart that feels and the will that obeys as well as through the mind that considers. A life and a God that we could understand would never content us. Our minds would cease to bow in reverence, our hearts to swell with adoration, and glad devotion would forsake our wills. The heart alone will fail no less than the will. Life will yield up its secrets neither to sentimentalism nor to stoicism. Mind, heart and will must co-operate in this high quest. God touches us on every side of our being, and with our whole nature we must find Him. We find God by living.

¶ There is a remarkable saying in the Upanishads: *I think not that I know him well, or that I know him, or even that I know him not.*

By the process of knowledge we can never know the infinite being. But if he is altogether beyond our reach, then he is absolutely nothing to us. The truth is that we know him not, yet we know him.

This has been explained in another saying of the Upanishads: *From Brahma words come back baffled, as well as the mind, but he who knows him by the joy of him is free from all fears.*

Knowledge is partial, because our intellect is an instrument, it is only a part of us, it can give us information about things which can be divided and analysed, and whose properties can be classified, part by part. But Brahma is perfect, and knowledge which is partial can never be a knowledge of him.

But he can be known by joy, by love. For joy is knowledge in its completeness, it is knowing by our whole being. Intellect sets us apart from the things to be known, but love knows its object by fusion. Such knowledge is immediate and admits no doubt. It is the same as knowing our own selves, only more so.

Therefore, as the Upanishads say, mind can never know Brahma, words can never describe him; he can only be known by our soul, by her joy in him, by her love. Or, in other words, we can only come into relation with him by union—union of our whole being. We must be one with our Father, we must be perfect as he is.[1]

¶ If I knew that I had fathomed all the love or all the wisdom of God, how faith and reverence and trust would fall away from a being that such powers as mine could grasp.[2]

2. What is there in this vision of God found in life that brings us peace in suffering, comfort in sorrow, and inspiration for living?

(1) There is the sheer majesty and beauty of God. Wearied soldiers on the march step out with fresh vigour when martial music cheers them. Tired travellers in the desert forget their weariness and press forward when the verdure of palms greets their eyes. Quiet

[1] R. Tagmore, *Sadhana*, 158.
[2] *Phillips Brooks*, 80.

places in the hills make pettiness impossible. There are pictures and poems that fill you with their beauty so that you forget yourself in ennobling thought. How much more shall the beauty and majesty of God do these and greater things? The beauty and majesty of the world confront you, and the glory and mystery of life. And then the imperious need of thought to find a source for it all; the uplift of the heart to a beauty these beauties suggest, and the voice of conscience speaking of perfect goodness, and demanding that you serve it, quicken the senses of the soul to perceive a Spirit informing all that majesty and greatness, pouring forth the wonder and beauty from its infinite depths. You become aware of a Presence in all things, through which all things are and unto which all things owe their being and their allegiance. Before this living source and home of all wisdom and might and majesty and beauty and goodness you prostrate your soul, and cry—

I had heard of thee with the hearing of the ear;
But now mine eye seeth thee.

(2) But the vision works its work in us, not only by the impression its majesty and beauty make, and the carrying of our thoughts and feelings beyond ourselves to them; it begets in us a new tone.

Nature's solitudes and Nature's grandeurs awaken such a tone in us, a tone that can bear and dare. Still more do high, heroic, beautiful, tragic things in pictures, poems, music, or life. How much more the sight of God? Men, seeing the boldness and, doubtless, a new purity and graciousness of love, once took note of Peter and John that they had been with Jesus. Eyes that have seen God bear witness of it in their look. The friends of God acquire an air of distinction. Citizens of the universal kingdom of the Spirit make men of the world appear provincials in their presence. The vision of God imparts a spirit that can feel nobly and act bravely.

¶ The faces of officers and cadets who surrounded the Maréchale on her platform undoubtedly constituted a large element of her power. Renée Genge, the Socialist, wrote a fine appreciation of her and her comrades, in which she confesses that what she finds 'remarkable among these young girls, pretty as well as plain, is the complete absence of the ordinary feminine expression. . . . In looking with searching, scrutinising eye at the faces enveloped in this ugly bonnet, we have not deciphered the least vestige of this expression, neither timidity, nor awkwardness, nor restlessness, nor the consciousness that people are thinking of them. Nothing. These faces are the free faces of free creatures.'

One day a French Baron, who had received a great blessing at the Maréchale's Conférences, said to her in the great hall at the Rue Auber, 'What you lack here is pictures; for instance, the saints. Those beautiful faces, with their sweet celestial expressions, diffuse a sentiment of reverence and quietness, and they would form such a beautiful background to you. You should have the Virgin, and Saint Francis, and many others. That is what you lack in all your halls: could we not do something?'

'Baron,' said the Maréchale, 'will you come here next Sunday evening?'

'Yes, certainly. Are you going to speak?' He never lost a chance of hearing her.

'Yes; be sure you do not miss it.'

Next Sunday evening she marshalled her little group of officers. She filed them in, men on one side, women on the other. She stood in the midst of them and spoke. At the end of the meeting the Baron came forward.

'Maréchale,' he said, 'you have no need of pictures. Those figures! those faces! *they* are your pictures.'

Her friend Frank Crossley was greatly struck by this incident. He wrote: 'I was specially interested in the remark upon inspired faces. I once heard Rendel Harris say of the biblical critics, that they might tear the volume into shreds, but never could rub off the light of God from the faces of His people.'[1]

(3) And the vision of God is always a vision of order. We become aware of a plan great and high, and have a sense that in all there is a meaning and a purpose. It is too

[1] J. Strahan, *The Maréchale*, 130.

large and high for us to comprehend, but we know that it is there, and some fragments of it we spell out. Our lives are parts of it and there comes a feeling that only as we accept it shall we understand them, and a conviction that only in acceptance can they come to their fullness. This plan is God's; it is great and glorious like Himself, and our greatness and glory are to serve it. It was the sight of it that lifted St. Paul out of and beyond himself so that he would gladly have been anathema from Christ for his brethren's sake. It was under the same spell that St. Augustine revealed the secret of the saint's power to bear and to dare. 'What is good for thee is good for me, O city of God.'

¶ Nekhlyudov sat down on the steps of the porch, and inhaling the strong scent of the young birch-leaves which filled the warm air, gazed long at the garden as it gradually darkened in the failing light. . . . [Presently] in the east, behind the coach-house, flamed the glow of the rising moon: summer lightning ever more brightly began to illumine the rank-flowering neglected garden, and the dilapidated house, and distant thunder could be heard, where in the west a black cloud was towering upwards overspreading the sky.

Nekhlyudov remembered how at Kuzminskoye he had meditated on his life and tried to solve the questions, what he ought to do, and how he ought to do it; and he remembered how he had become perplexed in these questions and had been unable to decide them, so many were the considerations involved in each. He now put to himself the same questions, and was astonished how simple it all was. It was simple because he now took no thought of what would happen to himself:—that no longer even interested him,—he was thinking only of what he ought to do. And strangely enough, while he was not considering his own needs, he knew without any doubt what he ought to do for others.

The black cloud had moved on till it stood right above him: lightning lit up the whole courtyard and the thunder sounded directly overhead. The birds had all ceased singing, the leaves began to rustle, and the first flaws of the storm-wind reached the steps where he sat. . . . Nekhlyudov went into the house. 'Yes, yes,' he thought, 'the work which is carried out by our life, the whole work, the whole meaning of this work is dark to me, and cannot be made intelligible. . . . Why should my friend die, and I be left alive? . . . Why was Katyusha born? . . . Why did this war come about? Of what use was my subsequent dissolute life? To understand all this, to understand the whole work of the Master is not in my power; but to do his will, written in my conscience, that is in my power, and that I know without a doubt. And when I do this, then undoubtedly I am at peace.'[1]

(4) There is one thing more in this vision of God to comfort and inspire—faith in God's perfect wisdom and goodness. God's majesty and beauty are so very great, and His plan in wisdom, profundity, and pervasiveness so far beyond our understanding, that we cannot rid ourselves of the stubborn conviction that could we but see and understand all we should know that all is well. So we find rest in the vision of God by leaning our weakness on His infinite strength, our ignorance on His perfect wisdom, and our future on His unspeakable love. Nor does He fail to confirm our conviction and minister to our souls by revealing to us by His Spirit things that eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor have entered the heart of man to conceive. In these voices of the Spirit we

> Hear at times a sentinel
> Who moves about from place to place
> And whispers to the worlds of space,
> In the deep night, that all is well.

Job's Magnanimity.

Job xlii. 10.—'And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.'

THE Book of Job opens with swift and sudden calamity coming upon the hero; it ends in a blaze of sunshine. The man who lost all—sheep, oxen, camels, asses, sons and daughters—gets in the end a double portion. To him is given again another happy household of

[1] Tolstoy, *Resurrection*, ii. 12.

seven sons and three daughters; to him is given unlimited wealth, perfect health, friends in abundance, and the respect and congratulations of all who knew him. Bearing in mind what he has gone through, you say instinctively, 'So he ought.' He has indeed been a hero, and he thoroughly deserves his reward.

Now the most remarkable thing about this happy ending is not the goods that came at last to Job, but the real goodness that became his. Job was a good man, a rich man, and a happy man at the beginning of the story, but he became a better man, a bigger man, a truly happier man in the end. The biggest thing you can say of him at the beginning is this—that he prays for his children. That is indeed a very fine thing to say of him or of any man; but mark, it is only a narrow circle that comes within the ambit of his prayers. At the end of the story we read: 'He prayed for his friends.'

When the Divine wrath was kindled against his friends—those friends who had suspected him of impurity, insinuated wrong-doing, misrepresented him, misunderstood him, tormented him and almost driven him mad by their cant and humbug, and their dry stilted commonplace platitudes—when they came to him, defeated in the end, Job, had there been anything mean, petty, spiteful in him, could well have trounced them, scored off them, laughed them to scorn, and turned on them, saying 'I told you so'; but no! his one ambition and desire is to pray for them. He was big enough to forgive them, to take them into his heart, and to bring them in prayer before God. 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do' is the prayer that he has learnt. What else could he have prayed for but that they might be delivered from the bondage of traditionalism, that they might see things with their own eyes; that they might enter other men's sorrow through a lowly door; that they might catch the vision of the God who does not make all suffering the result of sin? They needed praying for. If Job could pray for them, then indeed he could 'pray for those who despitefully use you.' What a magnanimous soul he has become! It was worth all the suffering to have come to the place where he has come. There is no trace of bitterness in him. He bears life no grudge. His soul has been enlarged. He is God's free man. No slavery holds him.

There is a suffering that makes men morose, sullen, cynical, bitter. Thank God, there is a way through suffering to the large place, to the vision splendid, and to a magnanimity that releases life. It can be so only in Job's way—by thinking earnestly, soberly, honestly, and by waiting on God, and praying for those who do you wrong. If the drama of Job is to have any grip upon us it must teach us at least this, that no captivity can ever be turned if we refuse to be large-hearted. Life knows no release to the man who harbours a grudge, cherishes resentment, or fails to pray for those who do him a wrong. Through the soul, and through the soul alone, man is made great.

The magnanimous man never loses his influence. He holds on through the ages. Think—to make a big jump in history—of Abraham Lincoln; what a hold he has upon our modern world. Why? because his heart was too big to bear malice or enmity.

'You have more of that feeling of personal resentment,' said he to one of his cabinet, 'than I have. Perhaps I have too little of it, but I have never thought it paid. I shall do nothing in malice. What I deal with is too vast for malicious dealing.' Can anyone forget those deathless words of his second inaugural address: 'With malice towards none, with charity towards all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see it, let us strive to finish the work we are in . . . to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.' No wonder Stanton said of such a man when he had just breathed his last: 'Now he belongs to the ages.'

It was said of Henry Ward Beecher that no one ever felt the full force of his kindness until he did Beecher an injury. Well did Beecher confess: 'My soul is too glad, too great, to be at heart the enemy of any man.'

Can we forget the words of Nurse Cavell? 'I thank God for these three weeks of quiet before the end. This time of rest has been a

great mercy. But this I would say, standing as I do in view of God and eternity, I realize that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards any one.'

That is what God meant to lead all hearts to. The human soul cannot live unless it grows magnanimous.[1]

The Bondage of Self.

Job xlii. 10.—'The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.'

With that prayer, Job burst the last shackles that held him, and entered into God's liberty and peace. It is the last and greatest word in a great and noble book. It is the Christian Evangel seen afar off, and it points the way of salvation for us all from a bondage that is heavy on us in this age—the bondage of self, and all the misery and dispeace that come of that.

As far as practical everyday affairs are concerned, we have long since learned the value of this very principle. For the disease of overself-consciousness, so prevalent in this age, all wise counsellors, both medical and spiritual, have the same prescription: 'Get some outside interest, leave yourself with your moods and symptoms alone. Look past yourself as something that does not greatly count. Fling your self away, lose it, and you will live.'

There can hardly be one of us who does not awaken, now and then, as from a long dream, to realize what a curse self is! It may be merely physical self-consciousness making one wretched and embarrassed without due cause. Or it may be moral, making a man or woman unhappy and discontented in a lot that is really enviable. We do feel, all of us, at some time or other, that life would be a very different thing, a much more useful and happy thing, if we could only blot out self, and live without an inward glance at all.

We are told that we have lost the sense of sin in these days. But we have got, what our fathers had not, a sense of what a dreadful curse self is, and, in large part, that is the same thing under another name.

[1] D. Ewart James.

Now, Job's captivity was at an end when he looked past himself. And his discovery simply anticipates and prophesies the Gospel of Christ. For Christ's manner of living, the yoke He bore and commends to us, was to leave His self in God's care, for good and all, and do, with both hands, and a quiet heart, the nearest thing that called Him. 'Not my will'—that was his constant prayer and goal—'but thine be done.' How many of us, when we hear Christ's invitation to us to follow Him, understand that He is calling us to that manner of living? Out of the miserable cramped self-life into the larger liberty of love to God and love to man, and service of these to the utmost. That is real life, in Christ's sense. That is the end of the captivity, to give oneself to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and leave all the issues with Him, and then turn our eyes and thoughts outwards and manwards, and see what we can do.

One cannot but be sorry for the soul who is immensely concerned about the variations in his spiritual temperature, who asks himself at intervals if his soul is right with God, and peers into the changing depths of self for some token of his standing that will comfort him for a while. But one regards him with the same feelings with which one watches a hypochondriac weighing himself, and feeling his pulse, and looking at his tongue every day, to see how he is. Of what earthly use in a world of God's is either of these men? What chance have those who have fallen by life's roadside, wounded and half-dead, of help or healing from these? To whom has such a person the leisure or the desire to play the good Samaritan? One wants to say to them, 'For God's sake, take your finger off your spiritual pulse for a little, and lay it, for a change, on some other person's trouble!' That is the way out of the captivity, Job's way, Christ's way.

And when the bondage is 'intellectual' the principle is the same. The sure prescription for much mental perplexity is: Go and do some Christ-like service. Go and live the life. Pray for your friends, or if you can't attain to that meantime, at any rate do something

for them. Give your brain a rest, and let your heart and your hands have a chance.

After all, there are nobler uses to be made of life than to sit with a book by the fireside, solving the riddle of the Universe. There are many fine causes in need of helpers, many souls being hurt in the battle, men, women, and children who are having a hard time. There's something there to do, much more worth while. And many a man who, in sheer desperation, has turned to such service, saying, 'Oh well, Heaven or no Heaven, God or no God, this at least I can do till the darkness ends all,' has found that, as if by accident, he has stumbled upon a door out of his gloom and darkness, and into the light of God's blue sky.[1]

He forgot his own soul for others,
Himself to his neighbours lending,
And found the Lord in his suffering brothers,
And not in the clouds descending.[2]

God's Rewards.

Job xlii. 10.—'The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.'

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells that he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Job sought Him diligently, and he had his reward. The reward has an Old Testament simplicity about it—he got twice as much as he had lost. Isaiah had the same simple conception of God's rewards when he promised the returning Israelites double for all their sins. But it is a truth constantly verified in experience. Job got double for all his sorrow, and so do we.

1. For, first of all, trial *calls into exercise graces and gifts that otherwise would have slumbered.* It is a common saying that when a man is blind, God makes it up to him in other ways. The memory becomes wonderfully ready and retentive, and the sense of hearing grows singularly acute. That does *not* mean that God has given new powers which He has deliberately withheld from other men. It means that the powers which in all of us are slumbering have been roused to splendid action by that loss. If it had not been for blindness, we should never have dreamed what hearing could achieve; just as we could never have guessed what stars there were if the sun did not set and leave us in the darkness. Widen that thought out, and you reach the gains of loss. It is one of the great truths in the world's story. If we lose something with everything we gain, we gain something with everything we lose. A thousand graces and a thousand gifts would have lain dormant in the bosom of mankind but for God's strange ministry of loss and trial.

¶ 'The man who is apparently injured by suffering may be in reality benefited. He may seem, to the careless observer, to be very harsh and bitter; but those who know him more intimately may discover an infinite depth of tenderness underlying this superficial cynicism. A striking example of this was afforded by the late George Dawson. He had experienced the severest trials, the greatest of all being this, that his only daughter, who as a child had been brilliantly clever, became at the age of twenty, owing to over-study, very nearly an idiot. Well, one Sunday he astonished his congregation, who were accustomed to clever sermons from him, by preaching a peculiar discourse, consisting of the shortest sentences, and the simplest ideas, fit only for an infant class. The explanation was this: his daughter was at church that morning, and her mind happened, as he knew, to be less obscured than usual. The sermon was addressed to her. The text was, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Now the man who could do this must have been possessed of the very rarest tenderness; yet if you had met him only casually, you would have said he was the most cynical and misanthropical person you had ever known. So that, I say, suffering, even when it seems to have injured anyone, may, after all, have had the opposite effect.'[1]

[1] A. Alexander, *By Sun and Candle-light*, 116ff.
[2] Whittier.

[1] A. W. Momerie, *The Origin of Evil*, 51.

2. Again, trial *turns cold pity into living sympathy;* that is another noble reward. We should never have known the meaning of human brotherhood, in the depth and tenderness which that term conveys, if it had not been for the discipline of sorrow. If you have ever read anything about the old Roman gods, you know what a heartless mockery their pity was. They had never drunk of the well that is called Marah; they had never borne the burden of the cross. But the sympathy of Christ is rich and sweet and strong, because He bore our burdens and suffered in our sorrows—one touch of nature makes the whole world kin. It is not in perpetual sunshine and unbroken health that the strong tenderness of sympathy is born. Perpetual sunshine may give rise to pity, but pity is very commonly an insult: it takes a heart that has fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, that has launched into the deep like Simon Peter, that has been wounded and bruised and baffled in the journey, that has looked into the night and felt its darkness, to sympathize with any brother man who is struggling towards the dawn. That, then, is a compensation of all trial. It makes us gentle and brotherly and tolerant. It gives us eyes to see, and hearts to understand. It breaks the barriers down, and we recognize each other. If the wilderness rejoices and blossoms as the rose, in a great measure our sufferings have done it.

You dipped your pen within the sun
And wrote with eager gold,
But on the page the phrase was grey
The flaming sun went cold.

And then you hid all other words
Save Joy, and wrote it clear
Within your book, but what men read
Was bitterness and fear.

At last you found deep wells of grief,
—With waters black and stern
Wrote Sorrow . . . now with quenchless light
Your blessèd pages burn.[1]

3. But the greatest compensation of trial still remains. It is that it *opens the heart to the heaven that is above us.* As with Job, it gives us a new hold on God; and whenever a man gets a new hold on God, he has more than twice as much as all that he had before. Moses saw much that was splendid at the court of Pharaoh, but it was in the desert that he saw the burning bush. In Jerusalem John had Mary, the mother of Jesus, in his home; but in the isle of Patmos he had the Lord Himself. There are men who never asked any minister to pray with them until the day when they lost ten thousand pounds. There are mothers who never thought of heaven, even when their little children were being baptized; but the childish laughter and crying and crowing were all hushed one morning, and they have thought a great deal about heaven since then. A man is more than compensated for the sorest hour, if it brings him to God and makes the unseen real. To live for eternity is of such vast importance that nothing on earth is too great a price to pay for it. So, then, you see that trial has compensations; but this is the greatest of them all.[1]

¶ A little child lay in its crib and sobbed, because it was afraid of the dark. And its father in the room below heard the sobs and came up and said, 'What ails you, my dearie, and why do you cry?' And the child said, 'Oh father, I am afraid of the dark. Nurse says I am too big to have a taper; but all the corners are full of dreadful blackness and I think there are things in them with eyes that would look at me if I looked at them: and if they looked at me I should die. Oh father, why is it dark? Why is there such a terrible thing as darkness? Why cannot it be always day?'

The father took the child in his arms and carried it out into the summer night. 'Look up, dearie,' he said in his strong, kind voice. 'Look up and see God's little lights.' The little child looked up and saw the stars, spangling the blue veil of the sky; bright as candles they burned and yellow as gold. 'Oh father, cried the child, 'What are those lovely things?' 'Those are stars,' said the father, 'those are God's little lights.' But why have I never

[1] G. O. Warren, *The Sword*, 24.

[1] G. H. Morrison.

seen them before?' 'Because you are a very little child and have never been out in the night before.' 'Can I see the stars only at night, father?' 'Only at night, my child.' 'Do they only come then, father?' 'No, they are always there, but you cannot see them when the sun is shining.' 'But, father, the darkness is not terrible here, it is beautiful.' 'Yes, dearie; the darkness is always beautiful if we will only look up at the stars instead of into the corners.[1]

[1] W. D. Ross, in *The Churchman's Pulpit*, xlv. 454.

I bless Thee, Lord, for sorrows sent
To break my dream of human power;
For now, my shallow cisterns spent,
I find Thy founts, and thirst no more.

I take Thy hand, and fears grow still;
Behold Thy face, and doubts remove;
Who would not yield his wavering will
To perfect Truth and boundless Love?[1]

[1] Samuel Johnson.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

INTRODUCTION

I.

THE PSALTER.

The Psalter, like our modern hymn-books, contains poems of very different ages, the range, perhaps, extending over 500 years. The Psalms composing it were used in the services of the Second Temple, which stood from 516 B.C. to A.D. 70, and had been enlarged and beautified by Herod the Great from 20-19 B.C. onwards. Not a few of the Psalms may well have been composed before the earliest of those dates, and the last of the Psalms can hardly be later than about 130 B.C.

1. It is a mistake to suppose that all the Psalms that bear the name of David were really written by him. The only certain composition of his is the Lament over Saul and Jonathan in 2 Sam. i. 19-27. To this may possibly be added Ps. 15 and parts (more probably than the whole) of Pss. 18, 24, and it may be some others. The headings to the Psalms which are found in our Bibles are not authoritative. They were not part of the original Psalm; their wording is ambiguous ('of David' does not necessarily mean composed by David); and the attribution to David is often impossible (in the Greek Version Ps. 137, 'By the waters of Babylon,' is labelled 'of David'). It would seem that the headings were added by conjecture at a later period. This would also apply to the indications of the circumstances in which some of the Psalms are alleged to have been written. While these have sometimes a certain plausibility, they cannot really hold good (*e.g.*, there is reason for thinking that Ps. 51 is later than the time of David). It is not known who actually wrote any of the Psalms. Neither the writers nor the congregations who listened to them attached any importance to the question of authorship.

2. In the form in which we now have them, the Hebrew Psalms are divided into Five Books, with breaks after Pss. 41, 72, 89, 106. At these places a special doxology (or ascription of praise) is added to mark the end of the Book, in the same spirit in which we add Christianized doxologies ('Glory be to the Father') at the end of each individual Psalm. In this way the Psalter has gone through many vicissitudes and repeated processes of editing at the hands of scribes like those of the age of Ezra and Nehemiah; it has a long history behind it; both in ancient and in modern times. But so far as this history affects only the outward form it is of minor significance.

3. It would be difficult to estimate the importance of the Psalter to the Old Testament Church. It was the support of piety as well as the expression of it; and to a worship which laid so much stress upon punctilious ritual and animal sacrifice the Psalter, with its austere spiritual tone, its simple passion for God, and its bracing sense of fellowship with the Eternal, would come as a wholesome corrective. Almost in the spirit of the older prophets (Hos. vi. 6) animal sacrifice is relegated to an altogether subordinate place (xl., l., li.), if it is not indeed rebuked: the sacri-

fice dear to God is a broken spirit. Thus the Psalter was a mighty contribution in one direction, as the synagogue was in another, to the development of spiritual religion. It kept alive the prophetic element in Israel's religion, and did much to counteract the more blighting influences of Judaism. The place of law is occasionally recognized (l., xix., 7ff), once very emphatically (cxix.), but it is honoured chiefly for its moral stimulus. It is not, as in later times, an incubus; it is still an inspiration.

4. To us the special importance of the Psalms consists in this, that they, more than any other Book, helped to shape and fix the forms and language of our religion, and especially of our worship, both public and private. Other people besides the Jews, as for instance the Babylonians, had their psalms, and these psalms, too, had a certain religious value. But no other ancient psalms are nearly so valuable from our point of view as the Jewish; because the Christian Church is directly descended from the Jewish Church, and builds upon it as a foundation. In the case of the Psalms the Jewish Psalms supplied the models of worship, of prayer and praise, of penitence and hope, of comfort and thanksgiving. Down to the present time no one has ever been able to improve upon these models, which were those made use of by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He Himself, and His disciples, the apostles, improved upon the teaching which they found expressed in the Psalter, though in many respects they left it just as it stood. But they did not interfere with the Psalms in the sense of which we have been speaking, as models of the outward forms and different kinds of worship, or of public and private approach to the throne of God.

5. There are tempers in the Psalter which are anything but lovely—hatred of enemies, protestation of self-righteousness and other utterances which prevent it from being, in its entirety the hymn-book of the Christian Church. Historically these things are explicable and perhaps inevitable, but the glory of the Psalter is its overwhelming sense of the reality of God. The men who wrote it counted God their Friend; and although they never forgot that He was the infinite One, whose home is the universe and who fills the vast spaces of history with His faithfulness and His justice, He was also to them the patient and loving One, who preserves both man and beast, under the shadow of whose wings the children of men may rest with quietness and confidence, and before whom they could pour out the deepest thoughts and petitions of their hearts, in assurance that He was the hearer of prayer, and that His tender mercies were over all His works. He was to them the source of all strength and consolation and vision. In His light they saw light; and in their noblest moments—whatever they might lose or suffer—with Him they were content. In Luther's fine paraphrase of Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'If I have but thee, I ask for nothing in heaven or earth.'

One supreme excellence of the Psalms is that God is so intensely near and real to those who wrote them. It matters nothing to them that He is invisible. They speak to Him and they know that He speaks to them as a man speaketh unto his friend. Every detail of their lives is laid before Him and made the subject of appropriate prayer and praise. And this relation is exactly right and as it should be. The Psalmists know that God is infinitely above them, and their feeling towards Him is always reverent and dutiful and yet never servile. It is the truest possible fulfilment of the great command: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' (Deut. vi. 5).

6. More than any Book of the Old Testament the Psalter has been 'baptized into Christ.' In the music which sounds from the harp of Israel the over-tones are Christian. The harmonies or over-tones by which an endless range of quality is conferred on a fundamental tone in music must not overpower it, or the note loses in both truth and sweetness. But the richness and fullness of the note is due to its over-tones; and the Christian cannot

listen to the strains of the Psalms without hearing the exquisite vibrations of promises greeted from afar, and a Voice sounds in his ear telling that 'all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me.'

It has often been noticed that the Christian Church has grown repeatedly weary of her own hymns, even though for a time they have enjoyed great popularity, but that it has never tired of the Psalms of David. Assuredly, if repeated use could have worn the Psalms threadbare, they would have been worn out centuries ago.

¶ The Psalter is incorporated into the liturgy of every Church. It has become the text-book of Christian devotion. For each generation it has served as the grammar whereby men have learned how to think and speak about their inward life. It has moulded and coloured the best men's best feelings, and given words to their most ardent prayers. Its voice has blended with the battle-cries and the cradle-songs of Christendom. What passionate confessions and petitions and thanksgivings have found utterance in its verses! What multitudes of the dying have spent their last breath on its syllables—since the day when Jesus Christ Himself died with a text out of the Psalms upon His lips.

Let us imagine that by some marvel such forgotten things could revive and come to light, and all these invisible and nameless associations could be made plain and marked down on the pages of the Psalter—what a book of wonders would be here! Like some old manuscript, copied and crossed and recrossed with the traces of its history and its uses, so (says Dr. John Ker) the Book of Psalms would show for what it really is—the great record and register of human experience, written over with the secret history of men's hearts, here blotted with the tears of repentance, here stained with the blood of martyrs, on every page illuminated with heavenly visions and made beautiful with the shining footprints of the messengers of peace. And when we seek refuge in Scripture from our own troubles, we turn from St. Paul's arguments, we turn even from our Lord's parables, and we go by instinct to the Psalms, these human utterances of men of like passions with ourselves—because they touch us and teach us and comfort us like no other portion of the Book of God.[1]

II.

THE RANGE OF THE PSALTER.

The Psalter is essentially a book of life. Not simply of eternal life, but of the life that is here and now! It draws its materials from life, and makes its appeals straight to life. The problems with which it deals are the perpetual problems of the race, as old as the hills but ever new. Its issues are in a sense dead, but in a most real and vital sense they cannot die. Its situations are human. Its spirit is human, its stories are human, its background is human. Its passions and longings, its strivings and yearnings have to do with real men and women. While this is true of the whole Bible, from the stories of Abraham to the struggles of St. Paul and the Apostles, it is particularly true of the Psalms. This book comes closer to the heart and conscience of the universal man than any other book in the Bible. It is personal to the last degree. It searches the deepest recesses of the spirit, and reveals its deepest needs; it ranges through the whole gamut of human emotion and feeling.

¶ In Browning's *Saul,* there is a sketch of David's range of song that appeals to every lover of the Psalter. As the gifted lad lifts the folds of the tent, and creeps beneath into the darkness, where at length he sees the form of Saul leaning against the central prop of the tent, he tunes the strings of his harp to charm the evil spirit out of Saul. And first he plays the tune all the sheep know, 'as, one after one, so docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.' Then 'the tune for which quails on the cornland will each leave his mate to fly after the player.' Then, 'what make the crickets elate,' or the one that sets 'the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house.' Then 'the help-tune of our

[1] T. H. Darlow, *At Home in the Bible*, 189.

reapers, their wine song, when hand grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great hearts expand.' 'And then, the last song, when the dead man is praised on his journey.' 'And then, the glad chaunt of the marriage, . . . first go the young maidens, next, she whom we vaunt as the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.' And then the great march, and 'then, the chorus intoned as the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.' But he stopped here, 'for here in the darkness Saul groaned.' Resuming his playing, he sang of 'manhood's prime vigour,' of 'the wild joys of living,' of the grace of the King, and one by one 'fancies grew rife which had come long ago on the pasture when round me the sheep fed in silence.' On and on he sang, rising to the heights of religious experience, calling Saul back to life as the spirit and he ended their strife.[1]

1. There are Nature Psalms in the book descriptive of the sky, the all-beholding sun, the moon and the stars. Successive days and nights are represented as singing and talking together of the glory of God, the glorious old sun coming down from his chamber in the east at sunrise to ride majestically across the sky, while the moon and stars, His handiwork, proclaim His praise. The magnificence of an eastern tempest is there; deep calls unto deep at the noise of His water spouts; the blackened sky resounds with the trumpet peals of thunder, His voice; the trees of the wood bend beneath the blast of the north wind, Lebanon and Sirion shake with tumult, while the flying, falling leaves carpet anew the earth. The fields spread out in living green, the woods, the hills, the valleys, the birds of the air, the wild creatures of the rocks, the miracle of life in the springing flowers, each and all the creatures and works of His hands, declare His glory and majesty and testify to the unity and beauty of Nature's God.

2. There are Psalms of adversity like the Lament of the Leper, cast out from his people, smitten of God and afflicted, crying from the depths of despair for the pity of men; or like the songs of the fugitive, hunted for his life, fleeing as a bird in the mountains from the snares of wicked men, tasting the bitter experience of finding his friends faithless; or the cry of the people oppressed in the siege of the city and amid the desolation of the land, with the consciousness that they have lost the Divine favour.

3. There are songs of strife, battle hymns, pæans of victory, triumphal odes, and prayers for success in battle. In these Jehovah is pictured as a War Lord, breathing smoke from His nostrils and fire from His mouth, treading the earth in His wrath till it trembles, or riding on a cherub with the speed of the winds, tented in a pavilion of darkness, hurling hailstones and coals of fire and shooting arrows at His enemies. Or else, as the host is encamped on the eve of battle, the priest lifts his voice in the king's behalf, to beseech that the Lord answer him in the day of trouble, send him help from the sanctuary, remember all his offerings, accept the burnt sacrifice, grant his heart's desire, fulfil all his counsel; and the host shout at the close that they will triumph in Jehovah's victory and in His name set up their banners. Even Messiah is a conquering War Lord, striking through kings in the day of His wrath, filling the earth with dead bodies, scarcely halting to drink from the brook by the way as He pursues His enemies.

4. In other Psalms the brevity of life, so like the short-lived grass, the fleeing shadow, the night-watch, the told tale, or the night-sleep, impress the heart and lead to the solemn resolution to number one's days, procure an heart of wisdom, and seek the beauty of the Lord. Sick-bed experiences bring similar reflections. Lying awake at night, tossing on a hard couch, eagerly awaiting the morning, how glad the soul is when the night is passed and the day dawns. Death had its terrors in the past as well as now, or rather life was and is sweet. Hence the Psalmist prayed that he might not go down to the pit, and girded himself with gladness when the Lord loosed his sackcloth and turned his mourning

[1] L. Hulley, *Studies in the Book of Psalms*, 54.

into dancing. The paths of glory, the Psalmist tells us, long before the sweet poet Gray, lead to the grave. But beyond the grave, behind the shadow, is the bright light of immortality, for the soul shall not be left in the grave, nor shall His Holy One see corruption. These foregleams of immortality are very few in number in the Old Testament and are therefore all the more precious.

5. There are songs of citizenship, civil duties, unjust judges and rulers and wicked men. The heart of the knave was never made blacker than this book makes it. The evils of bribery and perverted justice and wicked counsels are glaring as portrayed here. The injuries suffered by the innocent, the groanings of the poor, and the decline in the prosperity of the State due to evil rulers, are made vivid. On the other hand, the civic virtues are extolled. The man fitted to be a citizen of David's Commonwealth, that is, of God's, is described as the man who walks uprightly, works right things, speaks the truth inwardly, slanders no one, despises reprobates and loves the society of the good, keeps promises, acts generously and repudiates bribes. And so in hundreds of ways, line upon line, here a little and there a little, good citizenship is praised as good religion.

6. Side by side with these come banquet Psalms, guest Psalms, wedding Psalms, and other songs of the home life of the people, rejoicing in the full cup, the bountiful feast, and the freedom of the house. Could anything be more beautiful than the picture of the wedding where the royal prince, girded with the armour of war, sword on thigh, eloquence and grace on his lips, a national idol, renowned for military prowess, the terror of the nations' enemies, yet the friend and righteous ruler of the poor, comes forward amid the blessings of the people, the odour of incense, and the music of the skilled orchestra to meet his bride? And has not the bride the stature and bearing of a queen, as, with virgin attendants and robed in embroidered gown, she advances to join the prince, and share the good wishes of the throng for a strong dynasty? How full of joy are the songs sung at the grape treading, or the song of the harvest home, or the planting songs, when the rainy seasons settle the ridges, later issuing in the song of the reapers, 'Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, thy paths drop fatness; they drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the hills are girded with joy. The pastures are filled with flocks, the valleys are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.'

7. There are Psalms dealing with personal religious experience—the inward struggles of the soul with doubt, fear, wicked inclination; the secret pangs of remorse; the humiliation of despair and agony, the tears of repentance and groans of confession, followed by the joys of forgiveness. The cry of the penitent alternates with the exultation of the saint. The elevation and depression of spirit, like the flow and ebb of a river's tide, result in the melodies of peace, joy, assurance, trust. One enters here into the heart struggles of the people of God in Israel. The bitter agonies, the bloody sweats, the inward temptations, the pain of the spirit in its conflict with moral evil are felt through and through. It was in hours of quiet communion, in the hush of midnight, in the moment of high resolve, when the soul on its knees before the throne of God wrestled with the spectres of sin, that the triumphant faith that conquered doubt and torment was born. Have mercy upon me, blot out my transgressions, wash me from my iniquities, cleanse me from my sin, purge me with hyssop, hide Thy face from my sins, create within me a clean heart, renew in me a right spirit, take not Thy Holy Spirit from me—these are not pretty rhetorical phrases designed to catch the ear of a congregation, they are the sincere pleadings of a broken and a contrite heart.

III.

THE DIFFICULT PSALMS.

THERE are three classes of psalms in regard to which the difference between the two Dispensations (O.T. and N.T.) is most strongly

felt: (1) what we call the 'enemy' psalms; (2) the 'vindictive' or 'imprecatory' psalms; and (3) a class that we may perhaps call 'this life' Psalms, where the Christian view involves a fuller belief in the life beyond the grave. On each of these classes some remarks should be made.

1. *The so-called 'enemy' Psalms.*—It will be observed that enemies play a much larger part in the Psalter than they do in our modern life. The reason is this. In a settled and civilized society, where law and order prevail, the peaceful citizen is not much exposed to danger from private enemies. Indeed most people have few or none whom they would care to call by that name. But throughout the earlier history of Palestine, society was far from being settled and civilised. This is vividly illustrated by the state of things described in the Book of Judges. Even after the institution of the monarchy such law and order as there was depended almost entirely upon the king. If the king was strong and active and imbued with a sense of justice, things went fairly well. But, even at the best, there must have been a great amount of wrong-doing and violence that was wholly overlooked. If a man could not defend himself with his own right hand his chance of a quiet life was small. That is why so much was thought of having grown-up sons; and that is why the lot of the widow and fatherless was so hard. That also perhaps explains the frequent connexion that seems to be implied between sickness and the assaults of enemies; in many of the Psalms the writer seems to be exposed to both at once.

2. *The so-called 'vindictive' Psalms.*—What has just been said will also make us feel less surprised at the extreme bitterness of the language with which the Psalmists often denounce their enemies and persecutors. As they could not punish them themselves, they called upon God to punish them. The last verse of Ps. 143 is characteristic: 'And of thy goodness slay mine enemies . . . for I am thy servant.'

It was just in this respect that Christianity made the greatest difference. 'Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you.'

¶ We might quote here Dr. Driver's words regarding these Psalms. 'Such utterances may be palliated; but it is idle to pretend that they breathe the spirit of Christ, or that they can be appropriated consistently by His followers. They may be palliated in part by the consideration that the Psalmists, like the prophets, were keenly sensible of the great conflict going on between Good and Evil, between God and His enemies, both as between Israel and heathen nations and as between the godly and the ungodly in Israel itself; they felt that the cause really at stake was the very existence of all divine truth and righteousness upon earth: in desiring, therefore, the downfall of their ungodly enemies, they were but desiring the overthrow of evil in the world, and the triumph of righteousness and the cause of truth. Even, however, when full allowance has been made for such considerations, there remains a *personal* element, an element of personal feeling and vindictiveness, which cannot be eliminated. The foes of the Psalmist or of Jeremiah may have been hostile to a cause; but they also attacked and persecuted a *person;* and it is the personal feeling thus aroused which finds expression in these imprecations, and which also, judged by the standard of Christian ethics, stands condemned. We must admit it; and can only see in it the voice of persecuted righteousness, not yet freed from discordant notes by the precept and example of Christ. The Old Testament contains the record of a *progressive* revelation: the education of the chosen nation was gradual: there is a human element in the Biblical writers, which inspiration elevates and illumines, but does not suppress; it ought not therefore to surprise us if human feeling, which is so prominent in Old Testament writers, and as a rule is so singularly pure and noble, should occasionally betray its earthly origin.'[1]

[1] S. R. Driver, *Studies in the Psalms*, 27.

3. *The so-called 'this life' psalms.*—As compared with other leading nations of antiquity, more particularly the Egyptians and the Persians, the one point on which Israel was most backward was its conception of the future life. We can see the belief in a future life growing in Israel; but it was not until near the end of the period covered by the Psalms that it acquired any strong hold. Even in New Testament times, while the Pharisees had come to believe in a resurrection, the Sadducees did not believe in it. This defective grasp upon the future life is the key to the problem which most disturbed the minds of the Psalmists. They could not understand the apparent prosperity of the wicked. They began by thinking that the righteous must prosper and that the wicked must be punished in this life (Ps. 1). When they saw that this was not always true, they fell back upon the belief that the prosperity of the wicked was only for a time and ended in sudden ruin (Ps. 73). That, too, was not the final solution; but the same Psalm (73) suggests the deeper thought that the good man always had God at his side (and therefore that it must be well with him, whether in life or in death). The same problem occupies the Book of Job; and there, too, it does not receive a complete solution; that is reserved for the New Testament (Rom. viii. 31-39).

¶ The ordinary Hebrew belief was that there was a place of departed spirits which they called Sheol, the equivalent of the Greek Hades (mistranslated 'hell' in the Creed). But Sheol was a gloomy, joyless place, an abode of dust and darkness, where men lived on as phantoms, and kings kept a phantom state; a place where God was not, and life was sad and hopeless. It is amazing that the Hebrews had such a living faith in God, when the only immortality to which they could look forward was a posthumous immortality in their children. If we would know what an Old Testament death-bed was like, let us read the account of Hezekiah's sickness in Is. xxxviii. Here and there, possibly, before the Exile a devout believer had a glimpse of something better, but it was only a glimpse. We are apt to read too full a meaning into some of the expressions of hope in the Psalms and Prophets. But after the Exile we find a far fuller belief in existence, and when Christ came the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was very generally accepted by the mass of the people.

What had brought about the change? To some slight extent it may have been due to contact with eastern faiths during the Captivity, but we must not lay much stress upon this. The real ground for the change was a deepening spiritual experience which argued thus: 'God made man for fellowship with Himself, and gave him a share in His own nature. Can it be that death will interrupt that fellowship?' In many directions the spiritual experience of the race developed. The exile and the apparent forsaking of the chosen people by God drove them to profounder reflection upon the true nature of religion, and this they discovered to lie in an increasing fellowship with God. Again, they learned, when the national life was broken up, to value the individual more highly. The worth of the individual soul was one of the chief lessons taught by Jeremiah and Ezekel. And as they became aware of this worth, they saw how death could not really destroy the individual, who was made for a nobler destiny. Once more, the promise of return from exile led to the growth of a belief in the resurrection of dead Israelites, who ought, it was felt, to share in the joys of the Return. Then, after the Return, when the nation was still oppressed by foreign conquerors, and there seemed to be no chance of a fulfilment of the splendid prophecies of old, which pictured Jerusalem as the metropolis of a world-kingdom and the heathen as subject peoples sharing in her triumph, men's minds turned to the thought of some sudden catastrophe, some signal supernatural act of God by which He was to vindicate His sovereignty. God, or His agent the Messiah, would suddenly intervene; the existing world-order would perish and a new order would be set up. The righteous in Israel would be rewarded, the wicked and the heathen would be punished. And in order that this judg-

ment might take place a resurrection of the dead was necessary.

In some such ways as this did the belief in a future life develop among the Jews. But the determining factor in it all was reflection on what man's fellowship with God really implied.[1]

IV.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE PSALMS.

The Psalms are the lyrical expressions of all the various emotions and aspirations of the soul of man, in all the varying circumstances and conditions wherein man can be found; but suffused and influenced throughout by the consciousness of God, and a sense of intimate personal relation with the Divine. It is in this last respect mainly that the lyric poetry of the Hebrews contained in Holy Scriptures is differentiated from lyric poetry generally. Lyric poetry, speaking generally, is the expression of human emotion; and the true poet is he who possesses the power of interpreting, and translating into language, his own emotions and aspirations, or those of his fellow-men. In this sense we always speak and think of the true poet as one inspired, and of poetic genius as a kind of inspiration. The thoughts, the emotions, the aspirations, which stir within the human soul are often inarticulate, and may be unintelligible even to the one who feels them; but the true poet has the power of clothing with words, and presenting in a palpable and definite form to the soul of man, the affections of being which he had experienced, but not understood or realized in their full meaning. Often when reading or hearing some work of true poetic genius, some vivid description, some lifelike portraiture of the workings of an inner self, we exclaim, Why, that is just how I feel, though I could never have explained my feeling or put it into words. The interpreter of emotion and aspiration, the revealer to others of their own thoughts and the meaning of them, is thus, in a very true sense of the word, an inspired man.

Wherein, then, does the inspiration of the Psalms, the lyric poetry of the Hebrews, differ from that which we ascribe to such poetry generally, and in what respect is it superior? For it is very certain that, while we speak of any poetry which touches us very deeply as being in a certain sense inspired, it is with a higher and a deeper meaning that we use this word of the poetry of Holy Scripture. The difference, we take it, is here: the Hebrew Psalmists, in addition to being men of like passions with ourselves, in addition to being inspired with that poetic gift which enabled them to give expression to the thoughts which burned within them, awakening thus responsive echoes and kindling like fires within the bosoms of their fellow-men, were men suffused with the Spirit of God, the Revealer of spiritual truth to mankind.

In this respect we find a wide difference between the Hebrew Psalms and corresponding productions of poetic genius amongst other peoples. Contrast the choruses of some of the noblest and most elevating of the Greek tragedies with similar expressions of emotion in the Psalms; and it must always be felt that in the former something is wanting which in the latter is supplied. In the Greek chorus we constantly meet with outbursts of the soul's deepest feelings, called forth by the scenes which have been represented in the drama to which they form the interludes. And therein we have often the yearnings of man's soul after that which is high and true and pure, his longings for the vindication of the right, his indignation at the triumph of the wrong. The poet's soul reflects and interprets the emotions and aspirations of his fellows no less, and no less truly, in the Greek tragedy than in the Hebrew Psalms; but there is a lack there which cannot be supplied, because the knowledge to furnish it was wanting—a knowledge to be supplied only by revelation. The yearnings remain unsatisfied; the aspirations reach not their ideal, and are often hopeless of reaching it; the passionate outbursts of indignation die away into the helpless wail of despair.

But in the Book of Psalms all is different. The men who therein spoke for man to men, and for men to God, knew in whom they

[1] V. F. Storr, *Christianity and Immortality*, 50.

believed. They had knowledge of God—not simply, like the heathen poets ,feeling after God if haply they might find Him; but realizing that He was not far from every one of them, and that when they uttered the cry of indignation, the wail of sorrow, the song of exultation, or the expression of their soul's deep yearning, their words did not come back to them from the empty air, but awakened loving and sympathetic response in the heart of the Infinite. True, their knowledge was very imperfect, the light in which many of them lived was but as the dim twilight compared with that which we now enjoy; but, so far as it went, their knowledge was real and satisfying. Further revelation would show much more of truth, and also modify their conceptions of some truths then partially known; but what they did know was true, and in the faith of the truth which they possessed they spoke and sang. In this fact consists the key to the inspiration of the Book of Psalms.[1]

The Refusals of Life.

Ps. i. 1.—'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scorner.'

The first Psalm, with its plain statement of punishment for the wicked and prosperity for the good, and its picture of the ideal man as a diligent student of the written law, is now regarded as a product of the legal period. It was probably written as a preface for the whole book, for it shows the careful study of the scribe rather than the originality of the great poet. The writer finds his ideal man in the words spoken to Joshua, 'The book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate thereon day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written there' (Josh. i. 9). Usually one would say that the prose writer would quote from the poet, and not the reverse; but on this view the Psalm is not a poem in the strictest sense, as the writer has taken the most picturesque feature of his small composition from Jer. xvii. 7f.: 'Blessed is the man that trusteth in Yahweh, and whose hope is Yahweh. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out his roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.' This view seems to be quite reasonable, and it shows how we may gain a conviction as to the date and historical setting of even a small poem by considering its general tone and its relation to earlier literature.

Now let us turn to the first verse of the Psalm. The word 'blessed' is one of the gracious words of the religious vocabulary; a word with a great history in the religious experience of men. One would not wish to change it permanently for any other, but, nevertheless, in Scripture it had become a specialized word, and a frequent fate of specialized things, whether they be words or doctrines, or indeed professions, is that in the process they become dissociated from life. For the moment, therefore, translate this word into a garb more familiar and everyday, though still true to its real meaning. 'Happy' is the word. In this Psalm we are considering some unknown Hebrew singer's idea of the character and way of a happy man.

Here, then, is the Old Testament portrait of a happy man. He and his way of life are marked by certain abstinences and avoidances. This, at first sight, seems disappointing. To begin with negatives and refusals does not seem promising in pursuit of so positive a thing as happiness. But it betrays a consummate knowledge of life, and the point for us is that happiness is not to be drifted into, but whoever would be happy must count upon meeting certain sure antagonisms, and must brace himself to meet and defeat them. There is a presupposed alertness, discrimination and resolution. Like every other worthy thing, happiness is to be fought for. And when it is gained it is a victory. It is the beatitude not of the slack but of the determined. Behind the serenity of the saints is a struggle of soul. This is

[1] E. R. Palmer, *The Development of Revelation*, 221ff.

how the world is built—the best things do not fall into our hands and stay there unchallenged and unsnatched. There is always a lion in the path to the delectable fields.

Three kinds of actual peril threaten us. The wise man will guard his direction, his leisure and his company.

1. First, he will guard his direction. He will watch where he puts his feet. He will scrutinize his goings: 'Happy is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked.' There are some directions of life which are suspect, and there is no happiness for the man who indifferently adopts just what presents itself as a course of conduct, or who feebly drifts with the current. There is no happiness or promise for the life that is careless about its direction, and that takes no pains to make clear to itself the ultimate goal it is making for. We must bring a justifiable suspicion with us into the determinations of life; for there are many plausibilities.

¶ The people who go wrong are mostly 'white fools' and have no ill-intent; they just begin to drift, and the insidious currents round them stealthily bear them on towards the reefs. Just a little slackening of virtuous habit and religious self-discipline; some slight loosening of the old bonds at which they fretted. You yourself, like all of us, know too well how it happens. How pleasant and soothing to yield to your natural tendencies and your surroundings and jocund company, to lie relaxed and let the lapping waters of social life lull and hush you to soporific content! How delightful the early sweets of careless relaxation and the sound of lively voices and the sight of merry faces—the mere sensation of letting yourself glide onward as things take you! A sort of infatuation blinds you to the meaning of this indulgence of self, this abandonment of pious habits, this narcotising of conscience. You do not intend—not you—to cast off holy things; you settle nothing by deliberate choice, make no final decision to defy the calls of the soul and of Christ and the laws of rectitude. You let things lie, and you suppose they remain the same. But time is deciding for you. While you are passive and slack, the tides are determining for you what you will not determine for yourself; they are widening the distance between yourself and God, and are leaving you more and more helplessly at the mercy of ever-growing 'streams of tendency' that hasten towards moral disaster and shame.[1]

2. Here is the second avoidance: 'Happy is the man that standeth not in the way of sinners.' These two words in conjunction, 'standeth' and 'way,' suggest the necessity for care where one loiters, and they have a bearing upon the perils of leisure. A man or woman who has the secret of wisely and fruitfully using leisure, of making good odd times, may be generally trusted in those choices which lie beyond leisure. If the moment a man is free he chooses to be a companion of fools, one may deeply distrust his wisdom and even his rectitude when he is not free. Wise is the man who has sense not to hang about the pursuits of the godless, whether they be in the way of pleasure or of business. This wisdom lies on the straight highway to happiness.

But there is a deeper suggestion in the phrase. A way is a convenience of movement, and when a man is found standing in a path it suggests that he has become languid and tired. And this is what standing in the way of sinners conveys. It is a picture of one whose moral energies are dying down. It is what happens when a man makes small prudences and worldly expediencies his guide instead of godly principle. Moral languor is the penalty. He is at a spiritual and moral standstill. He is no longer keen. Idealism has gone, and the zest of life with it. He is a moral loiterer, and that spells misery and worse.

¶ Coleridge once declared that expedience is the anarchy of morals. That statement is unquestionably true when expediency takes less care to follow truth and goodness than to gain an apparent advantage, or seeks to satisfy desire at the expense of righteousness. We cannot bend the moral law to our wishes. We must obey or suffer the consequences of rebellion. The worst results of disregard of

[1] R. E. Welsh, *Man to Man*, 101.

its commands are seen in the confusion which ensues in a man's life when he refuses to follow what he knows to be good and true. He becomes uncertain of their existence, till at last he can no longer distinguish between them. The moral sense within him is so enfeebled or perverted that he loses the discernment by which men recognize duty and find strength to obey its demands. He calls good evil, and evil good.[1]

3. There is yet a third refusal: 'Happy is the man that sitteth not in the seat of the scornful'—the synod of the assembly of the scornful. Here is a picture of one who has stopped believing in the good of life. He is a man who cannot even laugh, for laughter is a healthy thing and 'doeth good like a medicine.' This man can only snigger and sneer.

So far the Psalm is a warning against the Rake's Progress, a chapter in moral evolution on the down grade. From expediency to ambiguity and uncertainty, and from these to the session of the cynics, in which nothing is any more worth while. All this is set down for the man who would be happy, in order that he may avoid it. Happiness is not on this line. It is a way not worth experimenting upon. It is to be refused. If it tempts, it is to be resisted. It begins with a shallow purpose in life; it has a middle-age of moral stagnation; it ends with having learned no good in life and scorning those who still hope and believe there is good to be found. This is the negative portrait, and the chief matter of it is that happiness is not by hap; like the Kingdom of Heaven, it suffers violence, and we have seen some of its foes.

¶ Here is a threefold series of threes, every one of which marks the plain and inevitable way of low descent. It is a whole philosophy of bad, worse, worst. To see that, the three little sentences must be read three times, each time putting the emphasis upon a single but different word. Then their depth will stand discovered. Badness is first a *counsel*—a thought of the mind; but this passes on into a way—a settled and definite practice of life; and this fixes itself into a seat—that which is resolved, definite, determined. Its friends at first are *wicked*—those who have no place for God in their thought; then they are sinners—the violators of the divine authority, the transgressors of the holy law; and they pass on to those who are scornful—the open and defiant mockers of life's sanctities. At first the man *walks*. He may be in the land of evil, but he is there as a pilgrim. He tarries not through the night, and quite soon he can be beyond its frontiers. Then he stands—the spell is cast, evil is weaving her wizardry, he is coming under the subtle energy of her attraction. Last of all he sits—he has caught her spirit and she has captured his soul. There is the whole process. That, to the careless and indolent, is the whole way. In a series of vivid pictures, painted in ever-deepening colours, the essential facts are presented, the way of badness is laid bare; its subtlety, its peril, and its certain close are revealed. The descent begins in that which can be easily changed; it ends in things that are fixed and very hard.[1]

¶ Few things in the language are more powerful than the poem entitled 'The Vision of Sin,' in which Tennyson tracks some man of splendid gifts along this course and on to the seat of the scorner. Read it—the first part slowly and aloud so as to feel its music, then let the soul be caught and swept along with the fierce current of its passionate utterances in the second part. Then comes the third part, a dreary monotone, full only of a cold, black, dreadful scorn—

A gray and gap-tooth'd man as lean as death,
Who slowly rode across a wither'd heath,
And lighted at a ruin'd inn, and said:
. . . . . .
Fill the cup, and fill the can:
Mingle madness, mingle scorn!
Dregs of life, and lees of man.

Then comes the hollow sneer at all things. And then the vision ends—

Below were men and horses pierced with worms,

[1] *The Spirit of Man:* Essays from '*The Times*,' ii. 87.

[1] G. Beesley Austin, *Beautiful Gates in Life*, 138.

And slowly quickening into lower forms;
By shards and scurf of salt, and scum of dross,
Old plash of rains, and refuse patch'd with moss.
. . . . . .
And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.[1]

Knowing Sin.

Ps. i. 1.—'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.'

THE Book of Psalms begins with blessedness: 'Blessed is the man that'—and we stop, for we are startled to find that no one can claim this blessedness, because there is no one who hath not walked or stood or sat in the way of sin.

1. 'Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly.' That is, blessed is the man who knows nothing about sin; not necessarily his own sin, but the sin of the world; the flush of whose innocence has never been replaced by the blush of consciousness.

Can any one of us claim 'I know nothing about sin'? Would that we could! How we long to go back to the age of innocence! We cry out sometimes in the consciousness of the knowledge which has come to us, and we would do anything in the world, almost, if that knowledge had passed away from us without stain.

Do you remember the first time you became conscious of sin? I remember as if it were yesterday the first time I became conscious of taking God's name in vain, not myself taking it in vain but another. I was getting out of a train at a suburban station, where I had been to school, and a man whom I greatly honoured and respected, because in my boyish conception he was an ideal man, stepped out of the train after me, and went to get into his carriage. His Irish coachman was holding the horse in a singular way. The horse was afraid of the locomotive, and the Irishman, instead of holding him by the bit, was standing in front of him and pulling on the reins, with the result you can imagine. And this man, whom I so much respected, caught the horse by the bridle, and aimed a kick at the coachman, and swore at him! As I tell the story I can feel that old thrill go down my back! I had never heard God's name taken in vain before; I had only heard that holy name in church or at my mother's knee as I prayed. I became conscious of sin. It was not my sin, but I became conscious of it nevertheless.

A man walks through the slums of a great city and is horrified by the sights and sounds that he sees and hears, and he becomes conscious of things that he never knew existed. A judge on the criminal bench in Philadelphia told me that when he first went on the bench he could not sleep at night for the evil things that were brought to him for trial. He never imagined that such evils existed in the world. 'Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly,'—and alas, we are walking there, for we are all conscious of sin!

2. If we could only stop there it would be bad enough, but the man who 'walks,' by and by 'stands.' The man who becomes conscious of sin, by and by becomes familiar with sin. And familiarity breeds contempt.

I can hear men swear to-day, and while it makes me indignant and angry, that first feeling does not come back. Why? I am a little hardened. I can see drunken men and drunken women to-day, a horrible sight; it makes me indignant, but that old feeling does not come that came to me when I was a boy and first saw a drunken man. Why? I have become used to it. It is one of the saddest things in the world, the hardening of our judgment and of our life against evil. A man walks through the streets of the slums of the city the second day, the third day, the fourth day, and he isn't horrified any more; he has grown used to it.

3. Then we take the last step, which is inevitable. Becoming familiar with sin we

[1] M. G. Pearse, *Some Aspects of the Blessed Life*, 4.

become somewhat apologetic for sin. We say, 'Well, after all, we are imperfect creatures! There is no use in trying to live up to an ideal that we can never reach.'

We begin to say: 'Well, after all, we were made so! We did not make ourselves. God permits Satan to exist, and there is no use grumbling about it; there is no use expecting to be a saint when you know you are a sinner.'

Then we go a little further. A man says, 'Well, I am going to have what I can out of life! I am going to succeed, no matter how many weak ones I push to the wall. We are here to get all we can; what is beyond we know not.'

Some people talk thus; but I suppose most of us will say, 'I never think or speak like that!' But don't you ever have any doubts as you look upon this world in chaos to-day? Doesn't there come into your mind, if it is not so expressed by your voice, 'Why, this is the devil's world, not God's!' and you wonder whether God's word will be fulfilled, and whether Christ, when He cried, 'I have overcome the world,' was not deceived? Doubts and fears prove that you and I are sitting down in the seat of the scornful, forgetting God, losing our devotion and loyalty to Him.

Can any of us claim this blessedness now? Is there one of us who can say, 'I know nothing about sin, I have never apologized for sin, I have never become familiar with sin'?

I said that no man could claim this blessedness. I was in error. There was One, and only One, the Man Christ Jesus, the Son of God on earth. The flush of innocence was never replaced by the blush of consciousness on His face. He never became familiar with sin—it was the awful thing that brought Him from heaven to die. And He never apologized for it. But alas, the only good man that ever existed on the earth the world would not recognize, and they took Him one sad day and put Him to death!

But you cannot kill goodness, and so Christ rose from the dead, conquering death as He had already conquered sin, and with His glorified human body ascended up into the heavens, promising to be with us always and promising to intercede for us with the Father. And now we can turn back to this first verse of the first Psalm, and although we cannot claim this blessedness, as of our own merit, we can claim it because the Son of God died that we might have it; and although we are conscious of sin, and familiar with sin, and even, alas! in our weak, sinful moments apologetic for sin, the dear Lord's nail-pierced hands are stretched out, and He speaks the words which we dare not speak: 'Blessed art thou, for through me thou art innocent of sin!'[1]

The Scorner.

Ps. i. 1.—'The seat of the scornful.'

Within the Books of the Old Testament, and chiefly, as might be expected, in the Book of Proverbs, the scorner is an outstanding figure, and is judged without mercy; but in the first Psalm he sits for his portrait. This is no peddling sinner who is led astray by evil counsel or caught in the snare of wayside temptations, a victim of his own foolishness or of men's wiles. He is lifted above advice, either good or bad; he goes his own way, caring for neither God nor man; he is not uncertain, hesitating, abashed, or apologetic in his sinning. It has come to this with him, that he takes his high seat, and there, as on a throne, secure from attack and seen of all, blatant and brazen, he flouts both God and man. There is nothing on the earth beneath or in heaven above that he does not despise and is not willing to insult. To such a height of hardy insolence has he grown that as he sits there, flung into relief by his own monstrous pride,—a man incapable of shame, and almost incapable of repentance—he is a fearful spectacle to him who understands; and the Psalmist declares, 'Blessed is he who sitteth not in the seat of the scornful.'

But the scorner does not often proceed so defiantly as this. It is only the very worst of men who deliberately face the right and spit at it, or consciously confess the wrong and glory in it. Many a man, however, who

[1] Floyd W. Tomkins, in *Record of Christian Work*, March, 1923, 196ff.

would never defy his conscience misreads and deceives it. He calls his wrong right; he justifies his passion and excuses his sin; and then, one day, he wakes as in a fortress which is impregnable to foes from without, and finds himself a helpless captive to a conspiracy within.

¶ When Mr. Bradlaugh sought to be elected as member for Northampton, Catherine Marsh wrote the following letter: 'May 14th, 1880. —My Dear Mr. Gladstone,—Will you let your goodness to me in time past extend itself to the present so far as to allow me to beseech you to save our country from the disgrace and shame of having the Apostle of Atheism, the champion of immorality, seated amongst our rulers. Dear Mr. Gladstone, will you read the 1st Psalm, and gain the blessing promised in its first verse, for yourself and your Cabinet, your Parliament and your country, by refusing to open the way to make the Parliament of Christian England the seat of the scornful. How God would honour, and bless, and prosper you for it. Yours ever sincerely and obliged, Catherine Marsh.'[1]

1. Now in all this tortuous and insidious approach of wrong-doing, what is the first sign that betrays the conspiracy? It is the scorner's frame of mind. A young man begins to hear moral distinctions dealt with lightly, and the things that were holy in his home made common and unclean; he grows callous to the finer touches of instinct and affection, and superior to the standards that once controlled him; finally, his reverence for these things is lost in the contagion of contempt, and he is sitting with his fellows in the seat of the scornful. No sign of youth is so disheartening as this first growth of scorn—that sudden growth of worldly wisdom which transforms many a wholesome boy into a man of affectation and ennui. It is a transition which at first has about it a touch of something ludicrous—the fine assumption that the world is a pricked bubble—but it is in reality the beginning of many a tragedy. It is the first step toward standing in the way of sinners and walking in the counsel of the ungodly.

[1] *Life and Friendships of Catherine Marsh*, 291.

¶ The most pathetic sight is that of a young man who left his native village a year or two ago with the priceless virtues of innocence and simple faith, who used to be an attendant at the little country chapel and a scholar in the Sunday School, but who is now observed during his visit to the old place to avoid the house of God, and to speak satirically of belief and worship. During church hours he is seen walking the lanes, or sitting, with his feet on the fender, gazing into the fire. What has effected the change? Is it that his residence in the city has quickened his intellect and raised him so far above his old village associates that he can afford to despise their simple ways? Let us not be deceived. His attitude towards his father's cherished beliefs and his old friends' religion has a sad history, and that air of superior wisdom and intelligence has behind it a sorrowful heart. The fact is, this youth came under the stiffening, paralysing influence of a city scorner, and he does not any longer pray or read the Bible his mother gave him when he left home; he became the miserable lackey and fag of one of these 'corrupters of youth,' and his mission in life is to act as a sort of jackal to some fierce lion which goes about devouring simple minds and weak hearts. That apparent intellectual strength is in reality weakness, and if the country youth will but try his strength, the issue will not be uncertain.[1]

2. What is the characteristic attitude of the scorner's mind? The Psalmist points it out. He speaks of the scorner as sitting in his seat. That is precisely what describes him. There is no activity, no accomplishment, no positive contribution, in the scorner. He is the neutral, the stay-at-home, the copperhead in the warfare of life. While others are fighting the battle of good or evil he remains there sitting in his seat. He might be good but for his lack of enthusiasm; he might be great but for his habit of contempt. The same superiority to emotion which keeps him from some forms of sin keeps him from all forms of service. At what is the scorner looking, as he sits, inactive and afar? If you watch him,

[1] A. H. Walker, *Thinking About It*, 68.

you will see that he is looking down. He is the superior person with the downward look of contempt. He may be despising folly, or ignorance, or sin, yet it is as one who sits above them and looks down on them. That is the scorner. The world that interests him is below him; he does not stoop to lift it—he simply sits in his seat and scorns it.

¶ Napoleon had the poor opinion of human nature which prevails among politicians; and we must remember that at the close of a violent Revolution men show their worst side. The bullies and intriguers are apt to come out at the top, vaulting over their more virtuous and consistent comrades. Napoleon had lived through that time, which, as we saw, sapped the idealism of his youth and imbued him with hard and cynical notions. Thenceforth he sought to find out the weak and bad points of men, and in general he exaggerated them. As a Councillor of State observed, 'Napoleon, looking down from the vast height which he had reached, thought the rest of mankind smaller than they really were; and this was the cause of his downfall.' There is a deep truth in this. A man who despises the human race will end by alienating it.[1]

3. What is it that can save man from the sin of scorn? It is the habit of living among things and thoughts toward which one cannot look down, but must look up. The scorner scorns because he has nothing to revere. He despises things which are beneath his feet. Deliverance from scorn can come only by one's attachment to things which cannot be looked upon at all except with reverence, loyalty, and awe. The service of that which is great redeems one from the scorn of that which is small. What is it that will save a young man from his *blasé* manner, his distrust of motives, his jaunty scepticism, the affectation of vices which he does not possess? Nothing but the discovery of a kind of work which demands of him more than he can offer, and to which he must look up.

This is precisely what the Psalmist says of the religious life. Speaking of the man who is neither the unbeliever, nor the sinner, nor the scorner, he says of him: 'But his delight is in the law of the Lord.' Here we have the two elements of rational religion: the law of the Lord, and man's delight in that law; a rule of life to which one must look up, and a reverent joy in obeying that rule. Suppose that into the midst of an unattached life there sweeps the power of a religious faith; suppose that behind the routine and drudgery of life which tempts to scorn there is discerned the law of the Lord in which one may delight—then life is enlarged and its details become significant, and the seat of the scorner no longer detains the soul.

It is the same impulse that draws a planet in its orbit round the sun. It is the force of attraction exercised by that which is infinitely larger than one's self. It is the gravitation of the life toward God. Just as the world we live in finds its place under that supreme attraction, so each human soul swings into place under the law of the Lord. It is set free from its contemptuousness when it finds its orbit round the larger centre. It is delivered from the downward look, because it is in the presence of that which draws it to look up.[1]

[1] J. H. Rose, *The Personality of Napoleon*, 162.

The Making of a Cynic.

Ps. i. 1.—'He sitteth in the seat of the scornful.'

This sitting suggests a settled mood. The scorn is not an occasional thing, something that comes and goes, and never tarries long. It has come to stay. It has taken up its home there. There is an air of permanency about it. It is not a swift spasm of ill-feeling, born one moment and destroyed the next. It is a fixed habit. It is a residential feeling; it is a mood which knits the days together and runs throughout the life. The 'seat of the scornful' is not a movable chair; it is an abode. This man has sat down to stay. He is not occasionally cynical; he *is* a cynic.

1. What is a cynic? The etymology of the word introduces the features of a dog.

[1] F. G. Peabody.

And what is there dog-like about a cynic? A snarl. Who has not known the neighbour's dog which crouches just behind the garden gate and snarls at every passer-by? The passer-by may be a little child, or it may be an old man; it makes no difference, there is a snarl for both. It may be a tinker, soldier, sailor; it is all the same, everyone is snarled at as he goes along the way. No matter how genial your presence, or how cordial your word, or how gracious your errand, there is a bitter snarl for you as you pass the gate.

And that is the dog-like attitude which makes the cynic. He snarls at everything, and he sniffs and he sneers at everything. He is sarcastic and satirical. He is a disbeliever in the inherent worth of things. He has no confidence in the sincerity of others. He has a suspicion of every sort of courtesy, and he has a carping attitude to every social usage. He flings a mocking jibe at everything. He laughs at everything with bitter laughter. He suggests that there is a rotting decay at the heart of every beautiful thing. He cannot look at a flower without talking about the manure at its root. When others are admiring a lovely deed he hints at an unclean motive. Even a mother's love is only an animal instinct, a fierce and merely selfish passion at the very heart of her affection. The cynic penetrates the lovely in search of the unlovely, and he is always sure that he finds it. You can hear his cruel laughter in the loveliest garden. You can hear his mocking cry in the sunny noon, or under the light of the midnight stars. Whatsoever things are ugly, the cynic thinks on these things.

¶ Criticism is most frequently found among young men, though when a man of riper years is a cynic it is a more serious matter. You will sometimes meet with a young man who prides himself on having 'seen life,' when what he has seen has rather been—death! He fancies he knows men and women, when, in fact, a whole world of noble manhood and womanhood lies outside the range of his vision and experience. He judges of humanity from his own shallow nature and his own frivolous companionships. Burrowing like a mole underground, he sneers at the very idea of the stars. Feasting himself like a dung-fly, he cannot believe that there are any creatures that really prefer the flowers. No man is a hero to him; he seems to have lost the capacity of admiration. No woman wakes a pure and passionate love in his breast. To his eye disinterestedness, patriotism, philanthropy, missionary zeal, are only phases of selfishness. Point him to the sun, he will tell you of its spots. Point him to some exquisite statue; he will show you the flaw in the marble. Point him to a noble character; he will put some fault under his microscope. This is the spirit of cynicism; and it works terrible havoc in a man's soul. It kills enthusiasm; it kills tenderness; it kills self-sacrifice; it kills even self-respect; it also kills religion. For 'he who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?'[1]

2. What is the matter with cynicism? The cynic is suffering from a serious heart disease. His heart is soured. Now there is always a direct connection between the condition of the heart and the character of the sight. We cannot be careless about our heart and yet retain the accuracy of our vision. As is the heart so will be the eyes. 'Blessed are the *pure* in heart for they shall *see* God.' That is the supreme example of the law, but the law has a hundred negative applications, and every one of them proclaims that a defect in the heart will be registered in a corresponding defect in the sight. If there is moroseness in the heart there will most certainly be perversity in the outlook. If the soul is soured the vision will be veiled, and the veil will be as a tinted lens, which confuses the natural colours of all things. Suppose you look at the world through a yellow pane of glass. Why, then you have a yellow world. Suppose you look through a dirty pane of glass. Why, then everything is defiled. Suppose you look at everything through the yellow pane of jealousy, or the red pane of envy—why, then you disfigure everything. And if you look at things through a soured disposition you will

[1] T. C. Finlayson.

not see anything that is lovely or sweet. The cynical heart has a charmless world.

3. How does a man become a soured man, a scornful man, a cynic? The order of the verse in this Psalm outlines the process of his creation. The process begins when a man begins to listen to evil counsels—'the counsels of the ungodly.' That is to say, he opens his mind in ungodly hospitality, and he lets in the germs of evil conduct. You cannot keep your milk sweet and yet let anything into your dairy; one dirty germ can sour an entire milking. And when an evil counsel is given welcome into a sweet mind, it begins its defiling and souring work. When we begin to cherish low ideals we speedily begin to act in ungodly ways: we choose our company, we seek the fellowship of the unworthy, we 'stand in the way of sinners.' There is only one further step in the process: sinful conduct is creative of sinful and settled disposition. Every act helps to create an attitude. Every deed tends to fashion a mood. We are soured by our own misdeeds. We become cynics, and we sit in the seat of the scornful.

4. Is there any hope for the cynic? I know only one way in which a cynic can be made sweet. He must be born again. Superficial remedies are entirely ineffective. Do what we will we cannot cleanse the dairy! But there is a fountain open for sin and uncleanness: 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.'[1]

I would I had in my best part
Fit Roomes for thee! or that my heart
Were so clean as
Thy manger was!
But I am all filth, and obscene
Yet, if thou wilt, thou canst make clean.

Sweet Jesu! will then; Let no more
This Leper haunt and soyl thy door!
Cure him, Ease him,
O release him!
And let once more, by mystick birth,
The Lord of life be born in Earth.[2]

[1] J. H. Jowett, *Springs in the Desert*, 9ff.
[2] Henry Vaughan.

Scorn.

Ps. i. 1.—'The scornful.'

Scorn, in the Bible sense, is a thing deeper than speech or action; it is a temper of mind, which need not in reality be coarse and loud, but which may be subtle and veiled. The scorner may not revile men—very likely he will only ignore them. He may not defy God—very likely he will dispose of God in an epigram. Possibly he will not be proud of speech and gait, but, like the Apothecary in the *Fair Maid of Perth*, will veil his haughtiness beneath a cloak of humility. But, however courteous his speech, and deferential his outer attitude, however unobtrusive his seat, he still counts himself superior to both God and man. For the infallible mark of the scorner is his immense and masterful self-sufficiency. He respects nothing and is inaccessible to wisdom.

1. Scorn takes different forms, and in our day we can all quickly identify intellectual scorn. No departure has ever moved men to higher things without some rebate, and the spread of education has not been without its drawbacks. Never in the history of the world have the people, as distinguished from the scholars, been taught so much, or known so much, and never have quick-witted pupils had such an opportunity of mastering positive facts in history and in science. A lad may learn more facts from half a dozen handbooks than his father gained by a lifetime of study; and this new wine, heady and crude, has intoxicated the modern mind. It is so easy to forget the difference between a handful of facts and eternal principles; so easy to confuse information and wisdom; so easy to speak of education and culture as if they were the same thing. Puffed up with a smattering of knowledge, the modern man loses his sense of awe before the Eternal Verities, and is apt to consider that if he is able to dissect a worm he has seen the end of all perfection. Intellectual scorn is bred in various kinds of soil, and to-day it draws its nutriment from the apparent certainty of the senses about physical

phenomena, and the apparent uncertainty of the soul about spiritual things. So, whatever is above physical nature—that is, cannot be put in a test tube—is belittled from a height, till not only philosophy and theology, but that which is greater than either, religion, is treated as an ignorant superstition.

¶ The operations of Science are limited to phenomena manifested to the mind through the senses, and existing separately in Space and Time.

But God, the Supreme, ever-living Reality, at once immanent and transcendent, can never come under scientific methods of investigation; can never be discovered as one object among many. He is no Being to be classified, or phenomenon to be explained. The objects with which Science can deal must be found existing in Time and Space; from their very nature they are finite, transient, and ever-changing.

But our conception of God implies that though indeed residing Himself in the whole frame and course of Nature, and thus constantly manifesting Himself in Space and Time, yet His dwelling-place is not in these. He is the Infinite One 'inhabiting Eternity.'[1]

2. There is also in our day, as in every other, religious scorn, which has its classical illustration in the spirit of the Pharisees, and which in our time has been admirably decribed by R. H. Hutton in his well-known essay on the 'Hard Church.' It is that spirit of narrow and arid intellectualism which starts either with the letter of Scripture or with certain theological axioms, and then proceeds to infer and to deduct, till at last it has forged an iron chain with which to bind, first its own mind, and then the minds of other people. This school of thought claims practically infallibility, and regards with immovable and often fierce scorn every person who does not hold its views and follow its practices.

As it is a cast of mind, it is found in all churches and in all creeds, but always it is distinguished by the same proud spirit and the same contempt of others. Sometimes it will insist upon a particular kind of church constitution, and will have the hardihood to confine the sure mercies of God to this channel, and to deny their blessing to those outside—an act of amazing though unconscious insolence as regards both God and man. Sometimes it will lay down the law about the particular way in which a single sacrament is to be administered, and then, on the strength of a text or two, will unchurch everyone who holds a different view. Sometimes it will make certain religious experiences the standard of Christianity, and certain habits of life, and will deny the sonship of God to those who have not felt, and who do not act, after this fashion. Sometimes it will undertake the defence of religion by insisting that a sceptic must either believe every jot and tittle of orthodox doctrine or he has no right to believe anything, and that, if he does not hold the Christian creed, he really has no business to be a moral person, thus attempting to bayonet human beings into either heaven or hell, without any regard to the facts of the case or the rights of human judgment. The Pharisee of Christ's day and of our day is impervious to light, and has no idea of persuasion; he cannot distinguish between his own notions and the majesty of truth, or between community with his little creed and communion with our Heavenly Father. There is no self-contentment so imperturbable, and no pride so bitter, as his, sitting, as this poor human creature does, in a more than papal throne, judging and condemning the vast mass of his fellow creatures who call God Father, and for whom Christ died.

¶ We must shun the spirit of sectarianism as from hell. We must shudder at the thought of shutting up God in any denomination. We must think no man the better for belonging to our communion; no man the worse for belonging to another. We must look with undiminished joy on goodness, though it shine forth from the most adverse sect. Christ's spirit must be equally dear and honoured, no matter where manifested. To confine God's love or His good spirit to any party, sect, or name is to sin against the fundamental law of the kingdom of God, to

[1] Medley of Rawdon.

break that living bond with Christ's Universal Church which is one of our chief helps to perfection.[1]

¶ It seems to me that Christians who squabble about forms of Christianity are like people in the following fable. In an eastern city the plague was raging. A great doctor came from a foreign country and gave the doctors of the city an elixir which was a specific for the plague. The doctors approved it and announced that they were going to administer it, but unfortunately, instead of setting to work to dispense it, they took to quarrelling and wrangling about the shape of the glass in which the elixir should be given, and every one to hear them would have thought that the virtue lay not in the elixir, but in the glass.'[2]

3. The chief and sorest punishment which befalls the scorner is spiritual poverty, the loss of knowledge and of goodness, which is the chief and the only irredeemable poverty of human life. The scorner cannot learn, because he neither knows his ignorance nor will he stoop to receive instruction. So he must live upon his own conceits till his head be filled with wind. And he cannot be blessed with increase of grace, because he will not bow himself at the feet of God. By his very scorn he shuts out God and all that God is ready to give.

They live for life, their needs are filled,
And in their false and narrow scope
They mock at dream and jeer at hope;
Their foolish noise shall soon be stilled.

They live and laugh and cease to be,
They fade and fall and rise again,
Their scorn is false, their praise is vain,
They live and die unceasingly.

They are as writings on the snow,
That pass and leave no trace behind;
They mocked the sun, for they were blind,
The Truth, because they could not know.

Have patience! Yet a little while,
Thou, too, shalt pass beyond their ken;
The stupid scorn of vulgar men
May madden, but cannot defile.[1]

[1] J. M. Connell, *Devotional Readings*, 215.
[2] R. H. Quick, *Life and Remains*, 112.

Intellectual Delight in the Bible.

Ps. i. 2.—'His delight is in the law of the Lord.'

The response which the Bible makes is to every part of our personality. The intellect, the emotions, the will—all find delight in it. Take the intellect.

1. The Bible *enriches the mind.* It is of vast importance that in our studies, as elsewhere, we keep the best company. The companionship of great subjects is in itself a liberal education. Open the Bible, and at once you find yourself approached by themes of the first interest. No other book in existence teaches history as this Book does. When we open it we feel much as we do when we pluck a fair flower from among the knotted roots of some venerable tree. Here I see the first man; I watch the dawn of the first Sabbath; with the Fall I am present at the first sin; beyond the gates of Eden I shudder at the first murder; I am with Cain as he lays the rude foundations of the first city; I listen to the first prayer, when men begin to call upon the name of the Lord. With Abraham I go forth in the company of the first emigrant and hearken to the earliest footfalls of that overland march of empire which, in the fullness of time, led man to our own continent. Standing there in Palestine I see, as in a mirror, the faces of mighty peoples reflected: Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome, all cast their images upon that little plate. The Book which begins with Mesopotamia, midway between the ancient East and the pushing West, closes on Patmos, that little island in the mid-sea whence civilization has sailed away and away beyond the splendours of the setting sun. Now what a wonderful Book this is which transforms every mind that studies it into a traveller wandering among the mightiest nations and the mightiest names of all time.

2. The Bible *broadens the mind.* As a

[1] G. C. Lodge, *Poems and Dramas*, i. 57.

general rule, the best-informed is likely to be the most liberal-minded man. Ignorance is narrow and narrowing. Knowledge, if it does no more than teach us how little we know, makes us generous in our judgments and hospitable in the welcome that we give to new truth. Let us consider for a few moments in what this marvellous faculty, our mind, ought to be interested.

(1) For one thing, in *Nature*. The opening chapter of Genesis tells me how God created the heavens and the earth. The study of rocks and plants and insects and animal life is begun there. I turn to the Psalms, and the hills clap their hands, the sea roars and the fullness thereof, the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. With the crowd on the shore I listen to Jesus. The lily, the bird, the leaven, the salt, the city on the hill, the treasure unearthed in the field rise to my mind at once. I pass in among the golden wheat, and Paul walks at my side to enforce from those ears his noble argument for the resurrection of the dead.

(2) Further, we are interested in *literature*. As literature alone our English Bible is immortal. The greatest of our thinkers and teachers have gone down on their knees to drink from this living stream. Living with it, even from the point of view of mere literature, you live in touch with greatness. Squalid thought makes squalid life. But you cannot look through the wisdom and the beauty of Holy Scripture without instinctively looking upwards. It is the book whence first you learn of God; whence, last, ere your sun goes down, you hear the music of God's dawn; the fountain from which our fathers drank, drawing liberty, courage, hope, faith, fearlessness. It was laid above their heart when they lay sleeping the last long sleep, having fought the good fight and kept the faith, as the flag is laid above a soldier's bosom, when his warfare is ended. It is a Book by itself, holding within its covers what none other can know—the burning bush of the presence of God's Spirit, speaking in quiet places to lonely shepherds and seekers, who have read the mystery of His presence in the stars, and among the quiet hills, and by the lonely shore, and have heard the winds whisper out of the immense void spaces, till their hearts became vessels of a holy light, and they themselves became path-finders and road-makers for the passing of God into the lives of men.

(3) We turn from literature to *art*. What music is comparable to the Psalter? Music thrills to the strains of the 'Creation,' of the 'Elijah,' of the 'Messiah.' If sculpture and painting are not prominent in this Book, certainly this Book is prominent in sculpture and in painting. We should be lost in any picture gallery were we ignorant of the scenes and of the characters of the Bible.

(4) From Nature and literature and art we rise to *philosophy*. In this Book the mind finds itself surrounded by the mightiest mysteries with which the intellect can grapple. 'All the wonders of Greek civilization,' Mr. Gladstone has said, 'heaped together, are less wonderful than is the single book of Psalms, the history of the human soul in relation to its Maker.'

(5) More practical in our bent, we may be studying with delight *political economy*. To do so will be to discover that law finds its basis in the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, and that twenty centuries of light and leading have not taught us as yet how to dare to live and let live in the golden splendour of the Sermon on the Mount. There is no problem rising to the surface at this present moment—and surely never were there more—which is not met by the teachings either of Moses or of Jesus.

3. The Bible *quickens the mind*. This Book deals with subjects of the first importance. Its coinage bears the image and superscription of the King of kings and passes current through all the centuries. A man never feels himself so small as amid these mighty Alps, but it is in itself an honour to be dwarfed by them. No petty sling stone brings us down, but the sword of a giant. Men in all ages, men in all lands, are never weary of debating the vast themes with which the Bible deals. God, man, sin, punishment, redemption, free will, eternity! These themes, perpetually

recurring, are always among the burning questions of the day. Some aspect of its theology is sure to confront us or some point in conduct. One age may be interested in speculation, another may be more practical. Our fathers would spend long days and nights in discussing a theological problem. We rather battle over those questions which are forced upon us by our modern civilization. The housing of the people, the rights of capital and of labour, our duties to our neighbours—these are matters which we debate. However this may be, the Bible has its word to utter. So long as the mind is what it is, so long will this Book live and move and have a being.

¶ Bare words from the Bible can still lead nations into or out of captivity, can open to us the doors of other worlds, can stir us so intolerably that we can scarcely abide to look at our own souls. As a great modern preacher puts it: 'Why, the Book has wrestled with me; the Book has smitten me; the Book has comforted me; the Book has smiled on me; the Book has frowned on me; the Book has clasped my hand; the Book has warmed my heart. The Book weeps with me and sings with me; it whispers to me and it preaches to me; it maps my way and holds up my goings. It is a live Book; from its first chapter to its last word it is full of a strange, mystic vitality.'[1]

Meditation.

Ps. i. 2.—'In his law doth he meditate day and night.'

To meditate upon any theme is to have one's thoughts come back to it spontaneously, gladly, to have them play about it during the leisure moments of the day and the quiet watches of the night. When we take meditation in this sense, we at once perceive the beauty and the naturalness of the connection between the 'meditation' and the 'blessedness.' When the Psalmist says 'Blessed is the man who meditates upon the law of the Lord,' he is not making a dry, logical, matter-of-fact statement. The blessedness does not follow the meditation in an arbitrary sort of way, but they are one and the same thing, and they re-act upon each other. The Psalmist is simply giving us his own experience. He has found pleasure, and he has found moral and spiritual strength by allowing his mind to be saturated with the Law of the Lord, and therefore speaking from his own experience and observation, speaking out of the fullness of his heart, he says that to meditate upon the Law of the Lord is a delightful and invigorating thing.

1. All meditation is thinking, but all thinking is not meditation. The Hebrew word here used means originally to sing or murmur; and the English word also means to murmur, to mutter, to con, to turn over in one's mind. To meditate upon a subject, then, is to mutter it over to oneself, to brood over it, to muse on it in one's thoughts. Of all times perhaps the most suitable for meditation is the evening hour, when the toils of day are over; of all days perhaps the most suitable is the Lord's Day, with its leisure and its freedom from the ordinary distractions of life.

¶ In his recollections of Dr. John Duncan ('Rabbi Duncan') Mr. James Matthew (one of his students) says: Dr. Duncan had great delight in expounding the Psalms; and his remarks were often very helpful, and illuminating. For instance, in Ps. i. 2 we have the statement,' and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' On this he remarked to this effect: 'To meditate is to mutter. In the East when men meditate they mutter. A Jew always when he meditates mutters. Silent meditation is owing to our Occidental civilization.' And to make perfectly clear what he meant he sat down in his chair, and leaning back muttered away to himself, audibly but indistinctly. Thus he pictured a meditating Jew.[1]

2. In the blessed life meditation is the starting-point. Whatever we need to see, to know, to be, begins in meditation on the Word. In the world a man sees only the point of time we call the present. Away on every hand there lies the infinite, the eternal, but

[1] T. H. Darlow, *At Home in the Bible*, 23.

[1] *The Expository Times*, xxvi. 334.

the eye sees only that over which it is bent. The man is in contact only with earth and his neighbours. All the consciousness of mind and heart, all the powers of body and soul are wrapped about the little business of the day. Hope and desire, which should soar into the heavens, are caged within these bars. To go up the mount of meditation is to pass out of narrow ways and busy tumult up into an ampler, purer air, out of dusty roads to dewy freshness. We begin then to see the true proportion of things. The present is lost, and the eternal unfolds itself. The city sleeps in mists below us, and the great heaven arches us. New faculties begin to unfold themselves in the stillness. There opens within us an eye that sees the unseen, an ear that hears other voices. And there, as of old, in the cool of the day there comes the very presence of God Himself, to walk and talk with His child.

He cannot know the blessed life who does not secure for himself this leisure—to be still in God's presence; to listen and to long for His coming; to give up the soul to communion with Him. Religion does not require that we should neglect any business which duty bids us do, rather it commends diligence. But religion does require that we so manage our business as to secure this quiet, earnest, devout meditating in the law of the Lord. Let there be what there may besides this, there can be no substitute for it. Endless religious activities, sermons, services, meetings, missions—these things make this quiet meditation only the more needful.

¶ The wilderness and the mountain-top are not accessible to all of us. A friend of mine reared a family of stirring children in one small miserable room. She made her soul, and a great soul it was, in her one armchair, with her apron thrown over her head. 'The bairns ken that mother wants a minute's quiet and stop their romps,' she said.[1]

3. About us on every side are specimens of the religious life that are stumbling-blocks to the world and a perplexity to the Church. They are lives that know no meditation.

[1] Annie H. Small, *The Kingdom and the King*, 25.

(1) There is a religious life always on the verge of extinction—a living death. Without any regular meals or visible means of support, it exists on scraps and crusts picked up anywhere; it clothes itself in such scanty clothing as it can find; it stands shivering and looking wistfully at the world's fire, glad to warm itself when no one is looking, or when those about it are not too particular; trying to snatch a little comfort as it lingers on the verge of the world's pleasure. It is the religious life without any strong, habitual, wholesome meditation on the Word.

(2) Again, there is a very common religious life that is for the most part peevish, querulous, grumbling. Wholly selfish, it is utterly incapable of any brave endurance, of any patient self-denial, and is without strength or beauty. It is the religious life that craves for stimulants. It lives on religious excitement—tears, thrills, raptures. This, too, is the religious life without either the milk or the strong meat of the Word; it never meditates in the law of the Lord. We cannot lay too much stress upon it, we cannot too earnestly impress it upon ourselves. If this quiet, earnest, habitual meditation be lacking, we can know nothing of the blessed life. If this be ours, then is the blessed life begun.

4. And do not let us think of meditation as only a foundation on which we build. Much more than that, it is as the sap of the soul. Meditation carries the purifying and repairing forces of the Word throughout the whole nature. 'Now ye are clean,' said the Lord to His disciples. 'Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.' The Word of God cleanses the thoughts and the motives and the imagination. No life is lower or more hopeless than his in whom every sight is made to minister to a foul imagination. And on the other hand, few shall walk the earth more safely than they whose minds are hung about with pure visions, within whose crystal walls there enters nothing that defileth or maketh unclean. Let meditation be the limner whose hands shall set in glowing colours the scenes of God's Word about the 'chambers of the imagery.'

¶ All through the heat and strain of his active life he kept this habit of secluded communion with the source of all power. It was the secret of his unfailing spiritual freshness and strength. The more he mingled with the active world of men and affairs, the more he felt the need of this cloister in the heart. 'There is something true,' he would say, 'in the teaching of the old Gnostics. Directly a project begins to take material shape, the struggle with evil begins. At all sorts of unsuspected turns you get jealousy, misunderstanding, misrepresentation, suspicion—the workings of the Demiurge.' When these 'unsuspected turns' brought the jarring note, it was in the Chamber of the Presence he tuned his heart again to the joyous music of service. It was there he breathed the 'larger ether, the diviner air' which lifted him up above all pettiness, all things sordid and mean.[1]

5. Note, further, that this meditation is not reverie—dreaming. It is so thinking about God, and so searching for Him in the Word, that it soon passes into the glow and blessedness of communion with Him. We may venture to alter the word and say: 'His delight is in the love of the Lord; and in that love doth he meditate day and night.' Sweet and hallowed companionship is ours with that best Friend and dearest Brother, who walks and talks with us whenever we meditate upon His Word. Not alone we sit. 'I will come unto you,' is His promise. And this is the appointed place; here He bids us wait and look for Himself. Beside this stream, whose waters make glad the city of God, and underneath this tree of life is His trysting place. And in that presence to lose the loneliness of life; to forget the fear and weakness; to find the mind illumined as He opens the understanding; to find the promises so rich, and personal, and present, as He opens the Word; to have the faith emboldened till, like John, it leans on his bosom, and with Thomas calls Him 'My Lord and my God'; to have in Him the past hushed—a holy calm which no voice of condemnation breaks; to have in Him the future all lit up with the glow of heaven's sunny distance: to find the love of all the heart drawn out and satisfied in Him—this is blessedness indeed. So comes the blessed life.

Hath not thy heart within thee burned
At evening's calm and holy hour,
As if its inmost depths discerned
The presence of a loftier power?

And as, upon the sacred page,
Thine eye in rapt attention turned
O'er records of a holier age,
Hath not thy heart within thee burned?

It was the voice of God that spake
In silence to thy silent heart;
And bade each worthier thought awake,
And every dream of earth depart.[1]

[1] J. L. Paton, *John Brown Paton*, 39.

Planted.

Ps. i. 3.—'He shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water' (R.V).

THE reference, says Tristram, is clearly to the date-palm, one of the most important and valuable fruit-trees of these regions. It has frequently been suggested that it is the lovely oleander, 'the willows by the water-courses,' which screen, with their perennial shade, every river and brooklet in the land, and for weeks, in the early summer, shed a glowing sheet of pink over the fringe of every water-course. But the oleander does not meet the conditions of this comparison; it is not planted, but indigenous, and it bears no fruit. The date-palm alone meets all requirements. Though it will grow in almost any soil, it will never bear fruit unless within reach of water; and as it is a dicœcious tree, with the stamens and pistils on different plants, it very rarely yields fruit except under human care. It is true, one often sees palm groves where there is no apparent sign of water, in the most barren deserts. But the wandering Arab knows well that, wherever he sees a palm tree, he has but to probe deep enough to find water below.[2]

[1] S. G. Bulfinch.
[2] In *Sunday School Times*, 19th March, 1892, p. 185.

1. Let us turn to the lessons of the text. The tree is planted. It did not plant itself. It surrendered itself wholly and utterly to the husbandman. He took it in hand and dealt with it, and that was the beginning of its prosperity. This utter and whole-hearted surrender of ourselves is the first step in the godly life. The difference between those who are the Lord's and those who are not is not that some are born religious: it is not that some have been brought up in the midst of religious influences; it is not that some people believe certain theories and creeds, and others either do not understand them or do not think about them. It is not a matter of understanding. The religious life is a matter of will, of choice, of surrender to God. On our part this is everything. How many weary souls, torn and distracted about notions and names, forms and creeds, might end their troubles to-day if they would but believe this. I have not to make myself right that He may bless me; I have to give myself to Him that He may do everything for me. How soon should the sad heart find rest, if it would give over itself and everything else to the Lord. My Lord, I can do but one thing. I can but give myself, just as I am, to Thee.

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind,—
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come.[1]

2. Planted, the tree begins to put forth at the one end roots that go out and grasp the rocks, taking hold of the firm earth and the great underlying ribs of the world, at the other end spreading branches and unfolding leaves that drink in the sunshine and the rain of heaven. It is an emblem of the man of God, rooted in obedience, rising to communion. The roots are fixed and twisted round the rock, they know no shifting, no change. That is the man of God: the law of God is for him an authority supreme, that knows no argument, no exception, no choice. There is stability. We know where to find that man. We can come and go, and we always find him there—rooted. But a tree is not all root. Laughing in the sunshine, sporting in the breeze, dripping with the shower, are the branches that push out over earth and up into heaven. They are the emblem of freedom. But the branches are always in proportion to the root. The obedience and the communion keep pace.

¶ A tree is the most steadfast and enduring of all living things. There are trees still standing that have lived through the whole history of England, and, in what remains of them, are as fresh and green as in their prime, showing no signs of old age or decay. Etymologically, the word 'true' is cognate with the Anglo-Saxon word *treowan,* to trust, to prove, which still survives in our word trow. Truth and trust are sister terms, these qualities being literally trees of the mind, firmly rooted in the soil of mental conviction. The Hebrew word for tree expresses the same attribute of strength and endurance. In this respect a tree is beautifully symbolical of the stability of the righteous. They are rooted in the Divine love. They have a strength and unity of character which enables them to overcome the common temptations of daily life as well as the great storms of persecution and trial. Their belief has passed beyond the reach of perturbation or shock. They have so grasped the truth of the glorious grace and faithfulness of the God of heaven that it has rooted them into a kindred constancy.[1]

3. It is not only a tree planted, but a tree planted by the rivers of water. There is not only the rock to hold on to, but there is the river for refreshment. This is a peculiarly oriental image. A river in the arid East is an artery of life, and only on its banks do trees

[1] Charlotte Elliot.

[1] H. Macmillan, *Two Worlds are Ours,* 204.

cluster and grasses grow. A tree, therefore, with its head in the torrid sunshine, and its feet laved by a perpetual stream that has its source far up a snowy mountain, is one of the most beautiful images of a righteous man, who flourishes in the withering atmosphere of the world, and endures the fiery trials of life, just because all his well-springs are in God, and the sources of his human steadfastness and hope are high in heaven. He is independent of the precarious supplies of the world: he has meat to eat which the world knows not of. And as the tree that has its roots in the perennial stream can make a friend of the scorching sun that would otherwise destroy it, and weave its burning rays into luxuriant foliage and juicy fruit, so the righteous—who are continually refreshed and quickened by the unseen river of life that flows from the Great White Throne—can defy the drought of evil circumstances, and turn all hostile things to blessed uses.

¶ There is a celebrated vine at Hampton Court that for many years disappointed the gardener's hopes. It was quite healthy, but there were few grapes. One year, however, it was unexpectedly laden with clusters of fine fruit. Seeking to discover the cause of this, the gardener laid bare its roots, tracked their ramifications, and found that they had suddenly gone through the banks into the Thames. It had 'sent forth its roots to the river,' and thenceforth ceased not from yielding fruit in richest abundance.

Unfading Leaves.

Ps. i. 3.—'His leaf also shall not wither.'

The leaf is the thing of the spring-time. It is the first thing that comes. How soon it loses its delightful freshness! How soon the sweet greenness passes into the darker shades of summer, and becomes sere and yellow in the older days of autumn! But our text speaks of a religious life whose leaf shall retain its freshness through all the changing days. The spring glory shall not wither as the years roll away. The beauties of the spring-time shall continue through all the seventy years. The characteristic charms of childhood shall never be destroyed. Life shall grow. It shall increase in knowledge. It shall broaden in experience. It shall open out large capacities and powers. But amid all the many and varied developments the beauties of childhood shall remain. 'His leaf shall not wither.'

1. What are the leaves which make childhood so beautiful? They are these—hope and sympathy. These are the fresh green adornments of the spring-time of life. How many of us lose them as life passes forward into its prime! There is so much that is hostile to them in the very atmosphere of the world we have to breathe. There is the terrible chill of sorrow and care. There is the repeated experience of failure. There is the growing sense of personal sin. There is the increasing knowledge of the world's depravity. There is the ever-present might of the tempter. There is the cold mystery of death. All these pervade and possess us; and in their bitter blasts our spring leaves begin to wither. The 'tender leaves of hope' begin to lose their freshness; the delicate leaves of sympathy begin to fade away. As men and women leave their youth and childhood behind, they are apt to decline in one of two ways—to become pessimists or formalists. A pessimist is a soul from whose branches the green leaf of hope has withered away. A formalist is a soul from whose branches the green leaf of sympathy has withered away. When these leaves fade and droop, the world becomes unspeakably poor.

That is a wonderful word in the Apocalypse wherein we are told that 'the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.' It is full of beautiful suggestiveness. 'The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.' If ever the wounds and sorrows of the world are to be healed, it will have to be by the leaves of the tree of life, the green leaves of the spring-time, the leaves of hope and sympathy. It is the child-like disposition which is to heal the world's broken heart.

And yet in what multitudes of lives the leaves have withered away! What crowds of men and women there are who have lost their hope and sympathy!

2. How is it that hope and sympathy are lost? This psalm affirms that it is all a matter of rootage. If some are not as hopeful as they used to be, not as sympathetic as they were wont to be, let them regard their decline as occasioned by bad or imperfect rootage. Here stands the word, proclaimed with unfaltering confidence, declaring that he who 'delights in the law of the Lord,' who lives in the mind of God, who meditates therein continually, shall be 'like a tree planted by rivers of water: his leaf shall not wither.' His leaves shall be as green in old age as in earliest youth. Circumstances shall not vanquish him. 'He shall not fear when heat cometh.' Amid all the fierce blasts which beat upon men in their prime, amid all the feverish haste and worry of these perspiring times, 'his leaf shall be green.' The drought of ingratitude shall not destroy the green leaf of his sympathy. The hot menaces of wickedness shall not corrupt the green leaf of his hope. 'The trees of the Lord are full of sap.' Rooted in the mind of God, our souls are 'planted by rivers of water,' and have resources at hand which can never be dried away.

¶ We all have read those books of Mark Twain which have so added to the merriment of nations, but it would be profitable at least once to read Mark Twain's final summary of life's meaning, his deliberate and well-considered statement of mankind's significance upon this earth:

'A myriad of men are born; they labour and sweat and struggle for bread; they squabble and scold and fight; they scramble for little mean advantages over each other; age creeps upon them; infirmities follow; shames and humiliations bring down their prides and their vanities; those they love are taken from them, and the joy of life is turned to aching grief. The burden of pain, care, misery grows heavier year by year; at length ambition is dead; pride is dead; vanity is dead; longing for release is in their place. It comes at last—the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them—and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence, where they achieved nothing, where they were a mistake and a failure and a foolishness; where they have left no sign that they have existed—a world which will lament them a day and forget them forever.'

Endeavouring to explain these words upon the lips of such a man as Mark Twain, one cannot say that Mark Twain had a melancholy temperament, for he made the whole world laugh. One cannot say that Mark Twain lacked moral quality and courage, for he did not. He was a robust, vigorous, admirable man. One of the finest deeds in the annals of financial integrity is Mark Twain's voluntary shouldering of a debt of honour and his paying of it at the cost of infinite labour. Nor can one say that Mark Twain did not have at his disposal all that modern knowledge could tell him. But Mark Twain had utterly lost his religious faith. He had concluded that the ultimate reality is physical and nothing more. He had decided that when humanity has finished its course on this earth, it will all have been, as another phrased it, 'a brief and discreditable episode on one of the minor planets.' That materialistic philosophy knocked the foundations out. For spiritual stability that can stand the strain of life's toil and the shock of life's tragedy and bring a man out inwardly victorious over disappointment and disillusion is to be found ultimately in a clear religious insight that

> . . . This world's no blot for us
> Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good.[1]

3. Does this accord with common experience? Who are the men and women who keep the green leaf, who retain all the hope and sympathy of their early days? Where are the hope and sympathy of the world to be found? They are to be found on the tree of life, on souls that are rooted in Christ. It is there we find the spring green through all the changing years. It is there we find the enduring hope which is the source and impulse of all labours of reform—a hope that some day lust shall be unknown in the land, that drunkenness shall be no longer seen in our streets, and that all the owls and bats and dark night-

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 32.

birds of the human heart shall give place to the birds of the morning, the sweet singers of the brighter day. That is a great and inspiring hope. On some souls it has withered away, but it grows green and fresh upon the souls of those who are rooted in their God. They carry the charms of their childhood on to the farthest day. 'He shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water. His leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.'[1]

¶ The following letter from the pen of George Macdonald shows, as his son and biographer says, 'how faith may give youthful happiness to a man, though time loads him with burdens.'

'I gather from your last letter that you are now fifty years of age. I am nearly twenty years your senior—not very far from 70 now, but if I do not in all things, I do in all essential things, feel younger than when I was a child. Certainly I am happier and more hopeful, though I think I always had a large gift of hope. It has been the one constitutional power of life in me—none of my making surely! . . . I am rather driven with work, I think sometimes; but if my faith were stronger, as I hope it is on the way to being, I should never feel that.'[2]

Prosperity and Success.

Ps. i. 3.—'Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.'

The Psalmist is speaking here of the religious man, the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord. Is what he says of that man true?

That depends on what we understand by prosperity. There are cases where it cannot be said of good men, acting from the best of motives, that whatsoever they do shall succeed. But let us distinguish success from prosperity. Success has to do with the price, prosperity with the value. When a man betters his circumstances, puts money in his purse, wins public recognition, at the expense of upright character, he may be justified on his level in calling it success; but no wise onlooker would call it prosperity. It is possible for such a man to go on adding more to much, conscious all the while that God can hardly reckon him a greater moral failure than his own conscience does, whenever it gets a chance to speak. In this sense he may succeed, and the world will acclaim it as success; but no man prospers except as his soul prospers.

1. Yet even in this matter of success the Psalmist has something to say for himself. If we look back thoughtfully over our past defeats we cease to talk about the want of things, and begin to question ourselves about the use we have made of the things we had. Our failure is not that our religion or our gifts fail us; it is for the most part that we fail our gifts and our religion. If our delight is in the law of the Lord, it is inconceivable that this shall have no correcting effect upon the things that lame us—such, for example, as defects of temper, lapses from good sense, and that slovenly half doing of things that reflects so seriously on our capacity to do them at all.

¶ A great athlete who played for Cambridge University at football went to Dr. Moule to ask his advice. This young Christian man said he found it impossible to keep his temper in the 'scrum'—ought he not, therefore, to give up football? Dr. Moule wisely said, 'No! But pray to God to give you victory over your temper.' He did so, and secured the victory, and his International cap too.[1]

2. But it is when we lift the question to a higher level that the word of the Psalmist stands out unassailable by any peradventure. It is when we get it into the region of character that his affirmation, like the fact on which it is based, defies all onslaught. Whatsoever a man doeth whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and whose deed is wrought in the spirit of this delight—it shall prosper. He ceases to measure the success of an action by its material return. It is no longer a question of what it makes for him, but what he makes himself in the doing of it.

[1] J. H. Jowett, *Meditations for Quiet Moments*, 120ff.

[2] *George MacDonald and His Wife*, 542.

[1] *The Happy Christian*, 97.

¶ I met a man a few weeks ago who was on the eve of an undertaking which meant, in a sense, everything to his future position and prospects. 'You must be an anxious man at present,' I said to him. 'Yes, I am anxious,' he answered, 'but only for those who with me are involved in this matter. If I know myself,' he added, 'I have left nothing undone I could have done to ensure and deserve success. If I fail, God's will be done; I am sure He has His own will concerning me, and I can trust it.' [1]

¶ Success is not abundance of means, but of manhood. Heaven's beginnings are in us now, or the outlook is bad. Heaven is knowledge of God, loyalty to God, likeness to God, and joy and peace and love in the bud. Heaven begins here or nowhere. Jesus had no beatitudes for earthly success, gold, political power, social influence, but for meekness, hunger after righteousness, peace-making, purity, patience. These are possessions death cannot spoil. Seek ye first His kingdom, and let things come and go as God wills. True wealth is not what my estate amounts to, but what I amount to. *Thou* art weighed is the timeless test, and character is the only eternal security.[2]

Ungodly.

Ps. i. 4.—'The ungodly are not so.'

Notice how the Psalmist, very uncharitably and narrowly, orders all men into two groups. If they do not belong to the former they do belong to the latter. Now that is said to be very harsh doctrine, and not to correspond to the innumerable gradations and shades of moral character which we find in the world. But if we ponder the matter, we shall find that it does correspond to facts. For if a man does not make God his supreme aim, and God's will his absolute law, then he makes something else his supreme aim, and something else his absolute law. And that departure in thought and feeling from God taints a life, however fair in other respects its surface may be. It is an undeniable deduction from the very fact of what we know God to be, and what we know our relations to Him to be, that lives lived irrespective of Him, and of His will, are ungodly lives, whatever in other respects their complexion. And so we reaffirm the doctrine of the Psalm, that, admitting all these gradations, still, in its main tenor, in its fundamental affinities, if a life be not godly, it is ungodly.

1. An ungodly man is simply a man who tries to get through the world without God. The word is plain enough in its meaning. It is not necessary for a man's life to be a shame and a disgrace for him to be ungodly. It is not necessary for him to be steeped in all sorts of vice in order to be without God. No; all he has to do to earn the title is to leave God out of his love. He may have love for wife and children, love for business, love for friends, but so far as God is concerned, he has not an atom of affection. There is no God enshrined in his love.

He is ungodly in his thoughts. Not two thoughts a day are consecrated unto God. His business, his everyday affairs—these things, he says, are quite enough to occupy him without his troubling his head about religion. Inspect all his motives, and you will find that he never does a thing for God's sake. There is no fear of God before his eyes; there is no reverence for God within his heart.

¶ All told, as nature writers go, I think John Burroughs the best of all the sweet chorus. I have all his books except the one on Whitman. I have asked to be excused on that for a time. But do you read Burrough's books? What is the lack of them? I will tell you. He has missed the Gardener. Burroughs is apparently an agnostic. I have gone through all his books, seen him walk on his dirt, gone down among the water lilies with him, stopped on the Hudson banks with him, heard the water brooks bubbling strangely intelligible speech with him, have been all wheres with him, but never saw a hint about the Gardener. If he only once had looked into the Gardener's

[1] A. Shepherd, *Bible Studies in Living Subjects*, 38.

[2] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 42.

face and said, 'I bless thee, Gardener, that the garden is so sweet,' Burroughs would have had no fellow in the earth as an interpreter of the out-of-doors. But in the garden he has missed the Gardener. We must not miss the Gardener. Is he at home? I call you to mark that you are out in God's flower garden, all a-bloom and all a-perfume, and all a-rapture of green. Do not miss the Gardener.[1]

2. A man may be moral, and yet ungodly. Whilst hideous immorality has slain its thousands, a godless morality has slain its tens of thousands. And for one that is dragged down to perdition by the mill-stone of vice, there are hundreds who are taken in the meshes of the net of a Christless virtue. He may even be religiously active, and yet be ungodly. It may be that he has a natural liking and gift for speaking, and he may, perhaps, take a very great deal of interest in the increase of a denomination and the outward mechanism of a church, but for all that he is totally devoid of the life of God within his soul. It is possible for a man to be an enthusiast in committee work—to be a constant worker in the outward details of church life, a very bigot in maintaining a creed, and yet be ungodly.

¶ Meditation is idleness, renunciation is folly, and good works are an offence, unless a man is living with God.

But, if a man is living with God, meditation will flower into prayer and praise, renunciation into glory, and good works into universal charity. . . .

The greatest misfortune that can happen to a man is that he should be living without God: for the moments that a man lives without God overshadow the lifetime that he has lived with God.

Nothing is worth doing, nothing is worth having, nothing is worth while without God.

When a man lives with God, he becomes radiant, as God is radiant; his feet bring peace; his hands heal diseases; his mouth utters joy.

He possesses the strength, and exhales the gentleness, of the Almighty.

And he lives for ever in innumerable forms, becoming eternal through ceaseless contact with the All-Glorious: for only God and life-with-God are eternal.[1]

[1] William Quayle, *The Dynamite of God.*

Four Great Pictures.

Ps. ii.

'Once,' says Dr. Stalker,[2] 'I had the opportunity of visiting an exhibition of the works of Meissonier. . . . It was a large and representative collection and it was a great pleasure to see the masterpieces which one had read about or perhaps seen in engravings only. But the first feature of the exhibition, which, I believe, struck every visitor, was the exceedingly small scale on which the pictures were painted. Why, there were works there whose fame is world-wide, and which had been sold for fabulous prices, and yet they did not measure more than a foot square. I remember one about the size of your hand, some of the figures in which were not bigger than flies, yet it represented with grand impressiveness a great landscape, in the middle of which there was a troop of horse ascending a mountain side. It seemed a wonderful thing, in so small a space, and with such simple materials, to produce such an impression of space, multitude, and impressiveness.

In the kindred art of literature it is perhaps more difficult in a very small space to convey the sense of gorgeous colour or multitudinous detail, or sublime impressiveness in its highest efforts. This is possible only in poetry, and only in poetry from the highest masters of the art. It is a question whether there could be produced from either sacred or profane literature a more remarkable instance of this power of putting a great deal into a few words than this second Psalm. Its theme is 'the glory of the Son of God.'

The theme is painted pictorially. There is not simply one picture, but there are four. They are exceedingly different from one another, about as different as could be; yet they

[1] Elizabeth Gibson Cheyne, *The Man with the Mirror*, 76.

[2] In the *Christian World Pulpit*, xlviii. 218.

are all closely connected, and at the end are brought together into dramatic unity. The artistic balance is perfectly kept, the same number of words being given to each picture. There is no hurry or crowding. Every picture is painted broadly and freely, and even with a great deal of elaboration; and yet the whole Psalm contains only twelve verses. The four pictures which it represents might perhaps be called, first, Revolt; second, Retort; third, Interpretation; fourth, Admonition.

1. *Revolt.*—The first scene is depicted in the first three verses:

> Why do the nations rage,
> And the peoples imagine a vain thing?
> The kings of the earth set themselves,
> And the rulers take counsel together,
> Against the Lord, and against his anointed,
> saying,
> Let us break their bands asunder,
> And cast away their cords from us.

When, in accordance with the Revised Version, the word 'nations' is substituted for 'heathen,' and the plural 'peoples' for the singular 'people,' it is manifest at once that this is a picture of Revolt. The subject nations and peoples round the Holy Land have become restless under the yoke. A spirit of disaffection has spread among them. Messengers have been sent from one petty court to another, whispering treason and proposing union for the common aim of emancipation. At last the movement has reached a head. The air is electric with change. Over wide regions are audible the clang of armour and the muster of armies. It is a great combination of revolting states. All this is expressed in a single verse, in the brief sentences of which seem to be heard the growls of discontent and the feet of converging multitudes.

In the second verse we are carried into the council-tent of the revolters. In the midst of the assembled armies there is a tent, in which are convened the leaders of the various elements of which the combination is composed: as the verse says, 'the kings set themselves,' that is, at the council-table—and 'the rulers (though the old translation 'princes' was perhaps better) take counsel together.' Through the mists of the past the eye sees very clearly that tent of the kings and the princes in the midst of the smaller tents with which the surrounding plain is dotted. In front of it a flag is flying, and sentries are on guard, while within, round the board, fret those warriors of the olden time—the old, proud kings and the young, eager princes. It is a dark deed they are plotting, and their tones are low and muffled. Yet now and then loud, ringing words burst out; for their hearts are full of passion. Then again, however, fear subdues their tones; for they are conscious that it is a perilous and even a desperate enterprise in which they are engaged. But no! they will not believe it to be desperate, and they will not turn back from the purpose which has brought them together.

At last they come to a unanimous decision, and this is expressed in the third verse:

> Let us break their bands asunder,
> And cast away their cords from us.

Like steers bound with bands and cords to the plough or other burden, they have been in vassalage to Jehovah and His anointed; but the yoke has been grievous and intolerable; and now, like oxen, when in a fit of rebellion and frenzy they kick over the traces and snap the harness binding them to the burden, they will break free from control and assert their independence.

It is a picture of the olden time—of an age of the world when war was every man's trade, and poetry naturally borrowed its imagery from that source—when the rule of religion and morality was represented by the sovereignty of the Holy Land among the tribes by which it was surrounded—and when Jehovah was accounted the King of the country, the reigning sovereign being His vicegerent. But the thing represented under these ancient figures is modern enough: it is the opposition of the world to the reign of goodness; it is the attempt of the persecutor or the traditionalist to arrest the progress of the kingdom of light and love; it is the enmity of the natural heart to the authority which curbs its lawless impulses.

2. *Retort.*—The second scene is depicted in the second triplet of verses:

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:
The Lord shall have them in derision.
Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,
And vex them in his sore displeasure:
Yet have I set my king
Upon my holy hill of Zion.

Perhaps this is the point at which the poetic originality of the Psalm reaches its climax. Having depicted the first scene in the first three verses, the poet places side by side with it one which stands to it in the most absolute contrast. The first scene is on earth, this one is in heaven; the first is a scene of wild excitement, this is one of absolute calm. There above, in the serenity of heaven, is sitting One who is surveying all that is taking place below. The revolters do not see Him; they are not thinking about Him or taking Him into account at all; but He sees them. Theirs is a secret conclave, and they intend to keep their design and the method of its execution absolutely hidden till the favourable moment has arrived; but He hears every word spoken, and He is reading off their hearts as if they were an open book.

To represent the Deity as 'laughing' is an extremely bold flight of the poetic imagination; yet it is not altogether unexampled. Authors of a melancholy and cynical cast of mind have described God as the Aristophanes of the universe, who sits aloft in the eternal calm of His self-sufficiency and contemplates the designs and doings of human beings as a spectator might watch the movements of an anthill, mocking their littleness, smiling at the fever and the fret of their endeavours, which are pure vanity, because human life is only a madman's dream, signifying nothing. Such a representation of God as this could not appear in Scripture. In the Bible man is never a trivial being, whose actions are of no consequence. On the contrary, his conduct always moves God: it may please and delight or it may distress and enrage Him, but it is never without moral significance.

So here there is a swift transition from laughter to a very different mood:

Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,
And vex them in his sore displeasure.

God is not the distant, silent, amused but unconcerned Spectator of the world. On the contrary, He comes down and intervenes in human affairs. Here He speaks out: first His laughter passes into anger, and then His anger passes into speech, His words being given in the last verse of this section:

Yet have I set my king
Upon my holy hill of Zion.

This great 'yet' is flung across the path of the revolters, not only as an obstacle to check their advance, but as an obstacle which will explode and blow into space both them and their designs.

3. *Interpretation.*—The third scene is depicted in the third triplet of verses:

I will tell of the decree:
The Lord said unto me, Thou art my son;
This day have I begotten thee.
Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations
for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for
thy possession.
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;
Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's
vessel.

In this section the language becomes more pregnant and, so to speak, shorthand than anywhere else in the Psalm. Not even Browning, in his most abbreviating mood, leaves so much to be divined. Yet it is all there; and, when looked at closely enough and long enough, it all becomes perfectly clear.

Obviously the scene is again changed: we are no longer in heaven, but back again on earth. We are not, however, among the revolters, but in the opposite camp, or rather between the one army and the other. The speaker now is the Lord's anointed, who is at the head of his troops. Apparently we are to conceive the two armies as confronting each other—the army of the revolters and the army of the anointed. But, before the battle is joined, the anointed comes forward into the

space between the hostile forces and makes a last effort for peace. Lifting up his voice and addressing himself to the leaders of the revolters, he says, 'I will declare (or 'interpret') the decree.' Which decree is meant? It is the decree with which the preceding section closed—the oracle flung by Jehovah in the face of His adversaries. But how do the revolters know anything about this decree? They are supposed to have heard it uttered. When Jehovah speaks in Scripture, it is in thunder He utters His voice; indeed, thunder is frequently called 'the voice of Jehovah.' When Jehovah, then, looking down on the council of war, at last uttered His voice, we are to understand that there burst over the revolting army such a roar of thunder as made them quake with terror and brought home to them the sense that they were being watched. They were compelled to remember the God above them, whom they had forgotten. But, as on one occasion in the days of Christ's flesh, when His Father spoke to Him in an audible voice, the people standing by said that it thundered, while Jesus alone clearly and fully apprehended the Divine message, so on this occasion the revolters, though appalled by the voice from heaven, only dimly comprehended its import; and, therefore, the anointed, on whose behalf it had been spoken, comes forward to explain to those whom it also concerns. 'I will tell of the decree,' he says, and then he proceeds, not to recite it verbatim, but to expound what it involves, and how it bears on him and on them.

The interpretation of the oracle is, 'Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee.' In ancient Israel the reigning sovereign was spoken of as the son of Jehovah; and on the day on which he was enthroned he might be thought of as being begotten. It may be to this event that the king is looking back. Or it may be that at the present crisis of his history, when his enemies have combined to dislodge him from his seat, God has so manifestly renewed his title to his place that the occasion can be spoken of as a new birth to his dignity—'This day have I begotten thee.'

At all events, the Divine voice has confirmed his position, and he goes on to explain what this implies: God's decree secures to him the entire sway embraced in the ancient promises to Abraham and in the sure mercies of David:

Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations
for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy
possession.

Nothing could stand in the way of this decree. The nations might resist; but, if so, they would be broken in pieces like a potter's vessel—an image of complete and irretrievable destruction.

4. *Admonition.*—The last scene is represented in the three last verses:

Now therefore be wise, O ye kings:
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
Serve the Lord with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish
in the way,
For his wrath will soon be kindled.
Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Who is the speaker in this section? It may be the anointed, who is continuing his address to the insurgent army. But it is more in keeping with the highly dramatic character of the Psalm to assume that there is a change of speaker. It is the poet himself, who, having observed the entire situation, comes forward out of the background as an intermediary and, like the chorus in a Greek play, draws the moral of the whole.

He addresses himself to the leaders of the insurgent army, whom, in the parallel lines, he calls 'kings' and 'judges'; because in the ancient world king and judge were interchangeable terms, judging being one of the principal functions of kings. He counsels them to pause and be advised: they must themselves see, in the light of what is happening, that their enterprise is hopeless and may be fatal to themselves.

Therefore, he advises them to kiss the son—that is, to give to God's anointed and vicegerent the sign of allegiance. 'Kiss the son, lest he'—that is, the Father, not the son—'be

angry, and ye perish in the way, for his wrath will soon be kindled' (or perhaps, 'his wrath is easily kindled'). He resents even a little disrespect offered to the son, and will terribly avenge it.

In many passages of the Old Testament, and even in some of the Psalms, the only destiny thought of for the enemies of Jehovah is utter destruction. But in this Psalm there is another alternative. Instead of dashing themselves in pieces against Jehovah's buckler, His enemies are welcome to become His friends. No wonder they can hardly believe this; and their state of mind, as they draw near to make their peace, is described in an exquisite phrase—they 'rejoice with trembling.' This is exactly the condition of mind caused by conviction of sin, when through the darkness in which the soul is enshrouded there begins to struggle the dawn of forgiving love. But this dawn will grow and broaden, till, in the full enjoyment of salvation, all trembling comes to an end. Therefore, the Psalm closes with words of perfect peace—and it is to those who have been enemies they are spoken: 'Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.' This is nothing but the voice of the gospel.[1]

Foredoomed Rebellion.

Ps. ii. 1, 4.—'Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? . . . He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.'

Regarded simply as literature, the second Psalm is a very artistic whole, consisting of four stanzas of three verses, each stanza with its own distinctive theme. A king of Israel, perhaps but recently crowned, is threatened with a concerted rebellion of subject nations around his land; the determination and virulence of these foes are depicted with extraordinary vividness—they 'rage,' or, as the Prayer Book Version has it, 'rage furiously together,' against their overlord, they take counsel together to throw off his yoke and assert their independence. To the poet their rising is a revolt not merely against Israel's king, but against Israel's God; and hence he declares their mutiny as vain and foredoomed to failure. Why, he says, these futile exhibitions of rage and bootless plottings, which Jehovah is certain to defeat, seeing that the king's cause is His own? In vain the rebels' shouts of defiance, in vain their crazy hymns of hate; there is no need to be disquieted by these manifestations, for God is not disquieted at all. He does not even rise from His throne to see what the matter is, or stretch out His arm, but laughs as a giant might at the menaces of a host of pygmies. Let them come on and do their worst if they are foolish enough, and be shattered for their pains as a regiment of crockery would be by the blows of an iron staff: nay, rather let them be warned in time, desist from an enterprise which can only lead to their undoing, submit to the authority they had thought to overthrow, and receive the reward of renewed obedience to their lawful sovereign.

Probably the inspired poet, whatever contemporary events formed the immediate background of his utterance, was thinking not so much of any actual king of Israel who was wielding the sceptre at that time, as of that ideal King who, as the Hebrew seers ever dreamed, should one day exercise universal dominion over the most distant regions of the earth. It is this thought that makes our Psalmist a prophet; almost unconsciously he is carried beyond the events and personages of his own time to that ideal future when Messiah shall be manifested, and, in spite of all enmity, railing rage, and angry opposition, achieve victory. Why seek to withstand Him upon whom Jehovah of hosts has set His seal? Why imagine vainly that they could check the spread of His sway, seeing it was God's decree that His dominion should be an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endure for ever?

¶ 'The second Psalm,' says Luther, 'is one of the best Psalms. I love that Psalm with my heart. It strikes and flashes valiantly amongst kings, princes, counsellors, judges, etc. If what this Psalm says be true, then are the allegations and aims of the papists stark

[1] J. Stalker, *The Beauty of the Bible*, 217ff.

lies and folly. If I were as our Lord God, and had committed the government to my son, as he to his Son, and these vile people were as disobedient as they now be, I would knock the world to pieces.'[1]

1. Leaving on one side both the immediate and the prophetic purport of the Psalm, let us glance at its essential and universal meaning. For the core of the sacred singer's contention is surely this: What is the use of striving and rebelling against the will of God? To think that anyone can defeat that will is to imagine a vain thing; to plan and plot against the everlasting Righteousness is to plan and plot one's own destruction; rebellion against that Sovereign Power is rebellion foredoomed.

This might just as truthfully have been called the core and essence of all religion, viewed as a rule of life. Has not all we call sin, all deliberate, wilful wrong-doing, its root in the disbelief in this fundamental fact, that there is One in whom Might and Right are identical, both equally supreme, One who therefore cannot be defied with success or impunity? The inspired writer is quite positive that to set oneself against Him who is alike all-powerful and all-righteous is sheer folly; he looks upon the devices of the wicked, the busy intrigues against innocence, and says, 'These are not, and they cannot come to, good.' The more they seemed to succeed for the time being, the more disastrously were they bound to fail in the long run.

Having made this confession of faith, and having described the busy, fruitless efforts of men to get rid of the Divine law, to break its bands and cast its cords away,—the image is taken from the attempts of a bad-tempered and stupid draught-bullock to get rid of his fastenings—the Psalmist makes use of an image so tremendous that only our familiarity with it can dull us to its impressiveness. That image is *the laughter of God*. 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.' A modern writer would not have dared to use such language concerning the Most High; he would have thought it derogatory to the Divine dignity, an offence against reverence. But are we not the losers by hesitating so much to describe the feelings of the Eternal in the only language we have? We are so afraid of being 'anthropomorphic'—as if we could be anything else!—that, in our thought of Him, we have almost reduced God to an August Silence, an Infinite Insensibility, a Sublime Abstraction; and when God becomes no more than that to men and women, they soon cease to think about Him at all. Far better represent Him to ourselves as pitiful and wrathful, sorrowing and rejoicing, approving and condemning, capable of being moved to what in human speech we should call grief or laughter; anything that will make God real, even realistic, to us, and not a rarefied, impersonal Ether, a nebulous First Cause!

Consider the contrast presented in our Psalm between the scene below and that above: the rebels all bustling about like so many ants, making their important, futile declarations of independence; while God does not stir at all from His 'throned tranquillity,' but, sitting and watching His mutineers, laughs at their puny efforts. They will dislodge Him, forsooth, they will prove themselves mightier than their Creator; the notion is not without its amusing side, and Omnipotence, unmoved, laughs consumedly. What are their armaments? Bows and arrows against scientific fortifications, children's sand-bastions raised to defy the incoming tide. What does all their boastful raging amount to? His lightest whisper would silence their discordant strains. They know not against whom they vaunt themselves; the Lord God hath them in derision.

¶ If one may say it without irreverence, history is nothing else than a prolonged exhibition of the scorn of God for human pride and of the contempt which He pours upon it, enduring it for a season and then, when it has played its fantastic tricks long enough, sweeping it away with the breath of His nostrils. Three hundred years ago the king of Spain equipped a huge fleet and despatched it against England, to chastise that heretical

[1] *Table Talk*, 49.

land and bring her under the papal yoke. 'The said Spanish Fleet,' says the ancient chronicler, 'being the best furnished with Men, Munition, and all manner of Provision, of any that ever the Ocean saw, and call'd by the arrogant Name of *Invincible*, consisted of 130 Ships: in which were 19,290 Soldiers, 8350 Mariners, 2080 Galley-Slaves, and 2630 great Ordnance.' On it came 'with lofty Turrets, like Castles, in Front like a Half-Moon, the Wings thereof spreading out about the Length of Seven Miles, sailing very slowly, though with full Sails, the Winds being as it were tired with carrying them, and the Ocean groaning under the Weight of 'em.' Trusting in their strength the Spaniards reckoned on victory; but there were two factors of which they had taken no account: one, the valour of the English seamen who met them with their little fleet; and the other, and by far the greater, the scorn of Him who sate in the heavens. He blew upon them, and they were scattered; He sent forth a mighty wind into the sea and drove them along the Channel and up into the cold North Sea. Some of the proud galleons were wrecked on the shore they had come to conquer, and of all that vast Armada only fifty-three achieved the perilous passage through the Pentland Firth and got home to Spain, with but a poor remnant of broken and dispirited men to tell how He that is enthroned in the heavens had laughed and mocked at them.[1]

2. So much for the laughter of God; what the Psalmist does not mention is the occasional perplexing, disconcerting, delusive *silence of God* in the presence of wickedness. It is so terrible because almost invariably it results in the wrong-doer's conviction that God is either inadvertent or impotent—that there is no God at all, and His judgment is a fable. So, little by little, fear, caution, conscience go to sleep, and ungodliness waxes bold with impunity; and all the time the wrath of God mounts higher like a wave ominously silent in rising, to fall with the more devastating force because its fall is so long delayed. The Lord does not send in weekly or even quarterly accounts; but men have been known to rub their eyes with amazement when His bills did arrive. The laughter of God has in it a note of warning if we listen to it betimes; but His silence, while sinners store up wrath against the day of wrath, is heavy with the note of doom.

You remember the caustic comment of Ogniben, the Legate, in Browning's poem, 'A Soul's Tragedy'—

I have seen four-and-twenty leaders of revolt,

meaning that every single one of them had come to grief; so we might say that history has seen a never-ending procession of such would-be leaders or followers of revolts against the Eternal, proudly professing their resolution and ability to set His commandments at naught, trusting in their pitiful strength or their more pitiful cleverness; and with monotonous iteration history records how they too have each in turn come to grief—yea, when they seemed to prosper most God held them in derision, and, unseen by man, beneath the goodly outside, He discerned the inner rottenness where the wholesome substance was being eaten away by the rodent ulcer of self-indulgence, envy, hatred, malice and uncharitableness. Vain dissimultation, vain mutiny! Terrible, to say it once more, is the laughter of offended Deity; more terribly bodeful His silence, preceding the single, unannounced, avenging stroke. What can the rebels do but wither under it?

What can they do? The Psalmist tells us in his concluding stanza: take warning, submit while it is time, withdraw from impossible positions, seek forgiveness from on high, and mercy from the Eternal ere the lightning of His anger strike home and consume. 'Now, therefore,' he writes, 'be wise—be instructed. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Embrace instruction, lest he be angry and ye perish in the way; blessed are all they that put their trust in him.'[1]

[1] David Smith, in *The Expository Times*, xii. 548.

[1] J. Warshaw.

Unrest.

Ps. ii. 1.—'Why do the nations rage, and the peoples imagine a vain thing' (RV).

This Psalm was written in a time of unrest. The poet who wrote it wrote in the midst of the distractions of the times. He wrote, however, with a stout heart, and with a strong and earnest purpose; he saw what was going on, but he saw it all without fear. He saw the great tide rising, he anticipated the victory of the enemy, but his heart was not crushed, his courage did not fail him, he stood strong and firm in his faith. Why? He saw, as the poet does see, a great and eternal principle running through the ages, and the principle is that out of unrest, out of passion, out of turmoil and travail the grandest things in the counsel of God shall assuredly emerge. The kings thought they were omnipotent when they laid their heads together in counsel against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 'We will break their bands asunder, and will cast away their cords,' and will be free of all these trammels of righteousness.

The poet allegorizes, and compares the great, the unseen, the all holy and omnipotent one to a human being. 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.' He will hold these blunderers in derision, He will scorn the scorner. He will laugh at those who, so living, little know that their cause, which is unjust, must absolutely fail; that eternal righteousness is armed with omnipotent strength; that the truth must prevail, that the truth shall be established; that nothing can tear down the foundations of righteousness, that the time is coming when God and virtue and truth shall be victorious over all the forces of the adversaries; that God shall reign over all, acknowledged as the Ruler of the universe and all the things that are therein. 'Then,' He says, 'I shall set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.' God's cause in the end will triumph, not to-day, probably, nor to-morrow, nor next year; but in God's own time and in His own way He will bring light out of darkness, He will bring victory out of defeat, He will bring a great peace out of the world's unrest, He will reign over all issues and control all events.

We are still in the midst of an age of unrest. There is intellectual unrest, social and political unrest, and religious unrest.

1. *Intellectual unrest.*—Far back in the history of the race men were inspired by the spirit of wonder and of awe, and they began to exercise more and more deliberately and successfully their intelligent faculties. They applied brain to the solution of the great mysteries and difficulties of the physical world. And throughout the ages they continued to apply it, to solve the mysteries, to explain the why and the wherefore of this and that and the other thing. It is marvellous the great things that the human intellect has accomplished in the world of physical discovery.

And the intellectual struggle goes forward, and it must go forward triumphantly, it must conquer ignorance and prejudice. Is there anyone that dare say to an intellectual man 'Thus far, and no further'? There have been men and companies of men, especially men associated with a stagnant Church, that loved ignorance and lived and moved in darkness; there have been companies of such men who said to the investigator of Nature, to the man of science, 'Thus far, no further. It is impious to come to conclusions such as you have reached. You are to do no more. Rest and believe; but, above all things, cease to think. It is a dangerous thing to think.' The Catholic Church of the Middle Ages adopted this position of tyrannous stagnation. It said, 'You dare not think; it is dangerous; in the name of religion we forbid you to think.' Now, we may forbid the great Atlantic to come up to its natural level as the tide rises. We may forbid it, we may do all we can to stop it; but God's Atlantic comes up all the same to the appointed level which God has assigned to it. So with the truth. Vested interests may be against it, the superstitions of the Church may be against it; it matters not if all these lay their heads together to plot against the light and the knowledge of His truth. 'He that sitteth in the heavens

shall laugh.' Truth must conquer, science must grow. We dare not stand against it, for it is God's truth and light. God's truth is armed with omnipotence.

The tree of Faith its bare, dry boughs must shed,
That nearer Heaven the living ones may climb;
The false must fail, though from our shores of time
The old lament is heard,—'Great Pan is dead!'
That wail is Error's, from his high place hurled;
This sharp recoil is Evil undertrod;
Our time's unrest, an angel sent of God,
Troubling with life the waters of the world.[1]

2. *Social and political unrest.*—There can be no doubt that to-day the nations of the world are not happy. In spite of all the recent efforts after peace there are still fierce rivalries, and much bitterness, and much discontent, and many jealousies between the nations. Not only is there unrest between the great nations of the world, there is also much unrest among the peoples themselves. Some are dissatisfied with the position of trade, some are dissatisfied with the incubus of taxation; some are dissatisfied with the kind of rule that is over them, and are firmly resolved that it shall cease; so that there is a constant social and political fermentation going on over all lands.

Such fermentation is not in itself unnatural, and in itself, although it is to be deplored, it is not altogether to be condemned, for all unrest of a social and political kind has for its purpose the bettering of things, the putting of wrong things right, the getting nearer to honesty, nearer to equal rights and fair play, nearer to all that constitutes the best in humanity, all that constitutes the amenities of modern life. If this unrest be repressed, it can be repressed only for a time. It is like God's tide, and it is bound to rise to its level. Fair play,—which is another name for God's righteousness—honour and honesty are bound in the end to win, but mere tyranny enthroned upon the throne of brute-force is bound to come to an end. God is armed against tyrants. 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision.' Only one kind of rule is to be maintained on earth, the rule of righteousness and peace.

¶ The struggle going on in all communities and amongst all races is a struggle to grow and have more of life. Whether at home amongst our workers, or in India, or Egypt, or Ireland; or between China and Europe—the struggle is the same. It is a struggle to make progress, and have more of life. This urge to grow is a biological fact. We cannot tell why it is or what creates it—but everything around us has this urge to grow, and to grow in its own particular way. One seed grows into a tulip, another into wheat. We know not how, but we recognise it. And it is precisely the same urge to grow that is causing all this apparent conflict. It is the fundamental creative instinct—the most powerful instinct of the human race, by which the race is preserved. Deep down in human nature lies this instinct; it is never forgotten, it is always present in the mind. It is voluptuous, anarchic, joyful, violent, powerful.

The other instinct is called the fighting, aggressive, acquisitive, possessive instinct. It is the instinct to acquire, to overcome. It is distinct from the creative instinct even in the biological growth, but the distinction manifests itself more clearly in the community or herd relationships. It has none of the beautiful and life-giving qualities of the creative urge. It is essentially, even in its romance (of which we have plenty), dull, selfish, destructive. It varies its forms from sheer animal force to the dialectical methods which have assumed the names of talent and culture. The same characteristics are in the force of the slave-driver, in the forces of the wage-nexus, and in the dialectical force of the council. These are hard sayings, but for the solution of the problems of the present times it is wise, and necessary, to look facts in the face.[1]

[1] Whittier.

[1] H. G. Wells, *The Story of a Great Schoolmaster*, 111.

3. *Religious unrest.*—Religion has provoked more unrest and, unfortunately, more passion than almost any other motive that has stirred the human soul. Religion has been at the bottom of a great deal of the dispeace which has agonized the world, but in truth it is religion falsely so-called. True religion makes for peace; false religion always makes for dispeace. Christ's religion is a religion of love and sympathy and helpfulness; it is the religion of the Prince of Peace. When we look about and see so many denominations of Christians, not openly warring against one another, but standing aloof from one another in a cold way, as though they were not brethren helping in the same cause, we should take note that it was never religion that split up the Church; it was always politics, worldliness, worldly ambition mixed with Christianity that gave the dispeace. Christianity pure and simple is humble, peaceable, gentle, brotherly, easy to be entreated. Let it be ours to banish, so far as we can, all the dispeace, hatred, jealousies and strifes which have marred and torn the body of Christ. Let it be ours, with all prayerfulness and Christian love, to regard all the denominations as no more than different regiments of the great army of Christ under whose banner we are called to serve.

In controversy's angry whirl
  This evil doom for ever dwells—
To cast away the shining pearl,
  And pelt each other with the shells.[1]

The Kingship of Christ.

Ps. ii. 6.—'Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.'

'MESSIAH'—properly the anointed king—was the name given by the later Jews to the ideal ruler whose figure they constructed on the basis of representations in the Old Testament, and who, they believed, would one day appear to deliver them from the tyranny of the nations, and assume the rule of the world. Stripped of its worldly features, and spiritualized, the ideal was appropriated and realized by Jesus. This Psalm is Messianic, not because it is a direct prediction, but because it describes an ideal rule, which, in a larger and more spiritual sense than the Psalmist's words actually suggest, was fulfilled by Christ. And so the Psalm is quoted more than once in the New Testament with reference to Christ.

If, then, the King is Christ, what is His Kingdom? Now, in the teaching of Christ no idea is given greater prominence than that of 'the Kingdom.' The gospel He proclaims is the gospel of the Kingdom. This lies at the centre of His teaching. His earliest declaration is the coming of the Kingdom; and throughout His public ministry the fact of the Kingdom forms the basis of His discourses. He speaks not of rituals, dogmas, creeds, ecclesiasticism, but constantly of a Kingdom, and of Himself as its King—a Kingdom commenced, but whose completion lay in future ages. This was His gospel. His followers are the children of the Kingdom. In the first and last note of blessedness in the Sermon on the Mount, He crowns those whom he describes as His own, and says, 'Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' The glory of the righteous is that they shall shine like the sun in the Kingdom of the Father. It is the Kingdom of God and His righteousness that men are to seek first in point of time and importance. They are to pray constantly for the coming of this Kingdom. For its sake they must be prepared to give up all things, even life itself.

As the Great Teacher gave such prominence to the idea of the Kingdom, it will be well for us to understand some of its leading characteristics.

1. The first we note is *spirituality.* It is designated the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Kingdom of God. It belongs to a loftier sphere of life than things that are seen and temporal. The privileges, duties, and expectations of its subjects are, if not exclusively, at least preeminently of a spiritual nature. That which is the rule of this Kingdom stands in direct antagonism to that which ordinarily prevails in other kingdoms. It is a Kingdom that is spiritual and inward. It cometh not with

[1] F. Langbridge, *Little Tapers*, 29.

observation—it is within. Those who become its subjects enter by a spiritual birth. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. They mind spiritual things. Principles are dearer to them than property. The claims of the soul are more imperial than those of the body; the invisible is greater than the visible; the unseen exerts a stronger influence over them than the seen. They are quickened into newness of life. In the Sermon on the Mount Christ sets forth the Kingdom as being spiritual in its nature. The humble soul, the poor in spirit, the meek, the peaceable, the pure in heart, are the subjects of His Kingdom. It reaches the thoughts and interests of the heart. The life of its subjects is to be a child-like simplicity, trustfulness, and freedom from corroding care.

2. Another characteristic of this Kingdom is *righteousness.* Christ urges men to seek the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness. He pronounced those blessed who hungered after righteousness. He said: 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God.' This last declaration must have sounded strange and mysterious, as the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees seemed far to exceed what was possible to ordinary men. Yet the Saviour requires those who thought they excelled other men to excel in righteousness. They aimed only at external propriety: He requires inward life. They wanted legal faultlessness: He demands love. He requests a new heart, the spirit of a child—not a fashion of outward seeming. He gives the golden rule: 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,' which is the sum of the Christian life.

3. *Truth* is another characteristic of this Kingdom. When Jesus stood in dignified silence before Pilate, it is said the Procurator marvelled greatly. 'Art thou a king then?' says Pilate. The answer is calmly and boldly given: 'Thou sayest, that I am a King. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice.' Thus did the accused Jesus of Nazareth, in the presence of the representative of Imperial Rome, announce Himself as possessed of a higher kingship than any which the rulers of Rome could boast; for He was King of Truth, and all true hearts would acknowledge His claim and do Him homage. He rested His royal rights on His testimony to the truth.

¶ In the teachings of Christ the Kingdom of God is set over against that of Satan; the Kingdom of Heaven is the antithesis of the kingdoms of this world; the kingdom of Satan is that of evil, fraud, cruelty and pride; the kingdom of the lower regions. The Kingdom of God signifies, therefore, that of goodness, of sincerity, love and humility. It is the Kingdom of the Heights.

The kingdom of the earth is that of matter and of flesh, of gold and of envy, of avarice and immortality; the kingdom of all things which a mad and corrupted humanity love.

The Kingdom of Heaven will be its opposite; it will be of the spirit and of the soul, of renunciation, of purity; the kingdom of all those treasures which are prized by men who know the nothingness of the others.

God is the Father, which means that He is loving-kindness. Heaven is superior to earth, therefore it is of the Spirit; Heaven is the dwelling-place of the Almighty; the spirit is the domain of loving-kindness.

The beast crawls upon the earth, delights in matter; the saint keeps his eyes raised to Heaven, longs for Heaven, and lives in the hope of dwelling there eternally. Most men are beasts; but Jesus seeks to make them saints. This is the plain but everlasting meaning of the Kingdom of God and of Heaven.

The Kingdom of God belongs to man. 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within us.' It begins now, it is of our own making and for our own happiness. It is in this life and in this world. Its existence in us depends on our own will, on our accepting or refusing it. When we shall have become perfect the Kingdom of Heaven will spread over the earth and be established among men.[1]

[1] Giovanni Papini, *The Story of Christ*, 57.

4. And His Kingdom is to be a *universal* Kingdom. There is opposition, intense and fierce: 'The heathen rage, the kings of the earth set themselves against the Lord and against his anointed'; but He that sitteth in the heavens says, 'Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree. . . . Thou art my Son . . . ask of me, and I shall give the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.' All nations shall serve Him—all nations shall call Him blessed. Moses and the pophets constantly point onwards to better days, but Jesus knows nothing higher than the Kingdom founded by Himself, and predicts for His cause a complete and universal triumph. 'And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.' If we had nothing more than the word of prophecy on which to rest our hopes as to the certainty of the Kingdom becoming universal in its range, that would be sufficient to give us assurance. But we have other things, other facts, and many things that are symbolic of the fact, that Christ the King is gaining, and will finally secure, universal empire.

Come then, and, added to Thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy!
Come then, and, added to Thy many crowns,
Receive yet one,
Due to Thy last and most effectual work,
Thy word fulfilled, the conquest of a world.

The Decree.

Ps. ii. 7.—'I will declare the decree.'

This is the climax of the Second Psalm. There is a decree of God—it is folly to resist. What is the decree? That God has set His own Son on Zion as King over all the earth. That decree is now made known. It had been less explicitly made known already. To keep the world's heart from fainting, the first promise broke through the darkness of the Fall, and gave assurance of personal suffering, but of ultimate triumph, on the part of the Redeemer; but now the words swell as with the blast of a clarion, and the note is of exultation and gladness, for the identity of the Redeemer is discovered; and He who aforetime has been known as the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the Shiloh who blessed expiring Jacob, the Angel of the Covenant, the Divine Prophet, is now revealed in all His majesty and renown as the brightness of the Father's glory, God's own and only Son.

It will now be the burden of all subsequent revelation. The seer's vision shall be full of it; the prophetic strain shall swell it forth more rapturously; it shall strike the minstrel's harp to the exclusion of all meaner themes; it shall cause the hearts of devout worshippers to throb with a strange joy: the talk of it shall lift ordinary men into prophets, and upon the sons and daughters of the spiritual commonwealth shall the inspiration come; and in the completed canon of the word its Apocalypse shall usher in the jubilee of earth and heaven. And this has been literally fulfilled. We should have a blank Scripture if we deleted from it the declarations touching the Kingdom and triumph of Jesus. The heart of the Bible, like the heart of the believer, 'is full of Christ, and cannot from His praise forbear.'

But there are further substantial guarantees for the fulfilment of this Divine word. These guarantees are to be found in the predictions of the resurrection, the intercession, and the perpetual enthronement of Jesus.

1. The Saviour's *resurrection* is a pledge of His universal triumph, because it attests the fulfilment of His mission, it vindicates His ability to overthrow the mightiest adversaries, and it proves the acceptance of His work in the counsels of the Father. If there was a period at which the issue was in suspense at all, it was when the Saviour lay powerless in the tomb. If that sepulchre had been filled on that Easter morning, if the stone had lain gloomy at the mouth of it, if the linen clothes had still shrouded a corpse, then we might have gone away with sorrow and wringing of hands, and have wailed out a long farewell to our

Master's triumph, and the world's hopes of life. The charnel would have been the end of being; death, the enemy, would have frustrated the Divine plan, and have reigned over a vassal universe. 'But now is Christ risen from the dead'—and in that rising all humanity lives. 'Because Christ lives, we shall live also.' The pledge of final and complete triumph is in that broken seal and forsaken grave.

2. There is also the Saviour's prevalent and perpetual *intercession:* 'Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.' There is a power in His pleading, backed as it is by the fact of His accepted propitiation, which is resistless. And the asking is perpetual. He does it through the lips of tens of thousands of His followers. Wherever the sacramental host gathers, wherever the believer's prayer ascends, wherever the lips of childhood lisp 'Thy kingdom come'—there is the intercession which He accepts and adopts, adding to it the fragrant incense of His own advocacy. The 'Ask of me' finds its continual answer in heaven. He shows His finished work. He pleads for the fulfilment of the covenant. He asks that the glowing prophecies may receive their accomplishment, that all heaven and all earth may witness that He has overcome principalities and powers, and that so the completeness and universality of His dominion may be assured to the universe of God.

¶ The Bishop had been preaching in the private chapel at Windsor upon the subject of our Lord's intercession in heaven, His presenting the prayers of His people to the Father, and enforcing them by the presence of His human body still bearing the mark of the wounds of His Passion. The Prince [Consort] had sent a message inviting the Bishop to walk with him in the afternoon, and turned the conversation to the sermon of the morning, saying that it had suggested to him an entirely new view of the subject, that he must not be supposed to mean that he accepted it, but that he should give it his most serious reflection, adding, 'Now, at any rate, I understand why the Church of England is so careful to conclude every prayer with such words as "through Jesus Christ our Lord." '[1]

3. And then there is Christ's *perpetual enthronement:* 'This man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.' From the triumph on the cross, and the triumph in the sepulchre, He ascended to the perpetual triumph on the throne. His ascension was the last royal fact in the series—Prophecy, Advent, Expiation, Resurrection, Empire. And it is our Immanuel who is thus exalted King of kings and Lord of lords. He did not drop the body as He entered into the cloud of ascension. The humanity to which He had stooped, which He had worn, in which He had suffered and triumphed, shared the glory as it had shared the agony and shame. It is our Jesus, ours still, ours always, who sits on the right hand of power, and who wields the sceptre of the worlds.

And now He stands strange, unaccompanied, vast,
Tall as all solemn, purpling mountains are—
Stands, while majestic, crumbling centuries waste.
The moaning travail of His soul is past.
He hath throned Love and wrought redemption far;
And who believeth on Him shall not haste.[2]

The World for Christ.

Ps. ii. 8.—'Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession' (RV).

THE sacred writers confidently expected the universal triumph of the gospel. They did not entertain a doubt on the subject. The triumph would not be easy or immediate; but it was as certain as that God lives and reigns and makes all things work according to the counsel of His own will. They foresaw and they fore-

[1] R. G. Wilberforce, *Life of Bishop Wilberforce*, iii. 45.
[2] W. A. Quayle.

told that the gospel would meet with opposition; enemies would arise without and within the Church; there would be times of apostasy. But the cause is God's, and it cannot fail. All the resources of the universe are pledged to the accomplishment of God's gracious and eternal purpose, the redemption of all mankind. We have this assurance to sustain and to inspire us as we labour for the world-wide conquest of the gospel of the grace of God. We are not leading a forlorn hope; we are not engaged in an impossible enterprise; our labour is not in vain in the Lord.

1. *Prophecy* says so. To Abraham was the promise given: 'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' This promise referred to the coming Christ. Our Lord said, 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day: he saw it and was glad.' In blessing his sons Jacob said, 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be.' Through Moses God said that all the earth should be filled with His glory. This promise was confirmed with an oath. The Psalmist said, 'All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and they shall glorify thy name.' 'Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him.' It was said of the Servant of Jehovah that He should not fail nor be discouraged till He had set justice in the earth, and that the isles should wait for His law. 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.' Daniel said that God of heaven would set up a kingdom which should never be destroyed, nor should the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it should break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms, and it should stand for ever. Micah said that the mountain of Jehovah's house would be established on the top of the mountains; and the peoples should flow into it. Zechariah sang, 'And he shall speak peace unto the nations: and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.' Zephaniah said, 'Men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the nations.' Habakkuk said, 'For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' Malachi said, 'For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles.'

Our Lord said to His disciples, 'And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd.' 'And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come.' He never contemplated anything less than universal dominion. The gates of Hades shall not prevail against the church which He founded. Westcott says that the true thought of this promise is that even the strongest citadel of evil shall not for ever keep out the triumphant hosts of the Cross. Our Lord's last command agrees with all that had been foretold. 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation.' On Patmos John heard great voices in heaven, and they said, 'The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.' The redeemed as John saw them constituted a great multitude that no man could number out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues.

¶ This is from the diary of the Rev. J. P. Struthers: Grant and I went over our chapters for the meeting to-night. His is the 2nd Psalm. I said God's words to Christ—'Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance'—were just as if a mother said, 'What would you like for your birthday? I would like to give you this.' And Grant said, 'Oh! The Eternal Son of God having a birthday!' And I said, 'Thou art Mine only Son. This day have I begotten Thee.' He smiled very sweetly and reverently, and said, 'I acknowledge.' [1]

2. *History* says so. On the day of Pentecost three thousand were added to the believers in Jerusalem. The Lord added to these day

[1] *Life and Letters of John Patterson Struthers*, 208.

by day those that were saved. In a little time the number was five thousand. Soon after the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests became obedient to the faith. After the death of Herod the word of God grew and multiplied. In Samaria the multitude gave heed with one accord to the things that were spoken by Philip. All that dwelt at Lydda and Sharon and many of those that dwelt at Joppa believed and turned to the Lord. Saul of Tarsus was among the believers. He was worth ten thousand average men, because he was a chosen vessel to bear the name of Christ before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. In Antioch much people was added to the Lord. In Iconium a great multitude of both Jews and Greeks believed. In Derbe, many disciples were made. In Thessalonica some of those who heard were persuaded, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. In Berœa many believed; also of the Greek women of honourable estate, and a considerable number of men. Many Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized. In Ephesus the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified among both Jews and Greeks. The statement follows: 'So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed.'

The testimony of later writers is in harmony with that of the New Testament. Tacitus speaks of the Christians as an immense multitude. Pliny, the Proconsul of Bithynia, wrote to Trajan that many of all ages and ranks, and of both sexes, had become Christians. The movement was not confined to the cities, but had spread into the villages and into the country. The temples were deserted, the sacred rites were interrupted, and the animals for sacrifice found few purchasers. Tertullian of Carthage wrote, 'Men cry that the state is besieged; that Christians are in the fields, in the forts, in the islands; they mourn as for a loss, that every sex, age, condition, and even rank are going over to this sect.' Speaking of our Lord, Eusebius said, 'He alone of all who ever lived is still called by the name of Christ, among all men over the world; yea confessed and witnessed to under this title, and commemorated by Greeks and Barbarians, and even to this day is honoured as a king by his followers throughout the world, admired as something greater than a prophet.' He alleged that Christians were the most populous of all nations; church buildings were too small, so they had to be pulled down to make room for new and larger structures. He spoke of the Church as shining throughout the world like the most brilliant constellation, and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as flourishing among all the human race. Origen said that the word spoken with power had gained the mastery over men of all sorts of nature, and that it was impossible to see any race of men which had escaped accepting the testimony of Jesus. Lactantius testifies as follows: 'There was no nook or corner of the earth so remote that the divine religion had not reached it, no nation so rough in life that it was not mellowing to works of righteousness by having accepted the worship of God.' Porphyry affirmed that every corner of the universe had experienced the gospel, and the whole ends and bounds of the world were occupied with the gospel. Another early writer asks what spot there is upon earth which is not held by the name of Christ? 'Where the sun rises and sets, in every quarter of the globe, the glory of His honourable heavenly majesty has filled creation. And although the dying limbs of idolatry still quiver in some countries, this deadly evil is to be cut off by Christians in every land.' Arnobius declared that the sacraments of this great Name are now spread all over the earth in so short a time. 'No nation now is so barbarous and ignorant of mercy, that it has not been turned to modify its harsh ways, and to come over to a peaceful temper by an acceptance of peace.' Lucian of Antioch held that the great part of the world, including whole cities, had yielded obedience to the truth. In the time of Diocletian Christian men were entrusted with the government of provinces and were discharged from the duty of offering sacrifices. One of the emperors gave as a reason for stopping the persecutions, that he had seen that almost all men were abandoning the worship of the gods and attaching themselves to the party of the Christians.

In the year 313 the Edict of Toleration was issued. Prior to that time Constantine was enrolled among the converts. It was with the sign of the Cross that he crushed his pagan rival and became sole emperor. The Edict put an end to the persecution. Christianity had won the day. Professor Freeman says, 'The Miracle of miracles, greater than dried up seas and cloven rocks, greater than the dead rising to life, was when Augustus on his throne, pontiff of gods and Rome, himself a god to the subjects of Rome, bent himself to become the worshipper of a crucified provincial of his empire.' Julian, a nephew of Constantine, undertook to restore Paganism. He went to the Grove at Daphne to worship. He expected to find a sumptuous sacrifice and a festal crowd of worshippers. But he was greeted by no crowd; he was greeted with neither choral songs nor fragrant incense. There was one priest, and one boy, and one goose, which was to be offered to the god of the Sun. Paganism was dead and could not be galvanized into the semblance of life. Soon after Julian died, and the attempted restoration came to an end. The Galilean had conquered.

3. *Faith* says so. The Church of that time had the Mediterranean world as its field, and a hundred million souls to evangelize and Christianize. The Church of to-day has the whole world and a population sixteen times as great. The Church of that time had one strong central government to deal with. We have many governments to deal with; but under all we are free to carry on our work. The Church of that time found a system of roads stretching out from the Golden Milestone in the Forum to Cadiz, to the Rhine, to the Danube, to the Dardanelles. We have railroads and steamships and cables and telegraphs. Then one language was understood by educated people in all parts of the empire. Now many languages must be mastered; but, with grammars and lexicons ready to hand, this task is immensely simplified. Then there was a peculiar people found in every city; they had the law of Moses and the prophecies and the psalms; their synagogues were open to the missionaries. These people were in a measure prepared to hear and to accept the truth. No such people is found to-day in the non-Christian lands. But the Christian nations are rich and powerful, and their fame has gone out into all the earth. The missionaries are supposed to represent these nations; that gives them a certain prestige and secures a hearing for their message. The Church itself is rich and strong and respected. She has a vast literature and is prepared to equip her agents as no apostle or evangelist was equipped in that early time. The Church of to-day has many advantages that the Church in the first centuries did not have.

We know that the early missionaries went about this work in earnest. 'On Roman roads built for military expeditions, down the current of strange rivers, into forest recesses, into the thick of city life, where the convention of culture and the cruelties of paganism offered bitter welcome, they went forward to their destiny, evermore dreamers who made the dream come true. Nothing less than the whole creation could satisfy them. It is for us of to-day to see the same vision, to be actuated by the same motives, and to seek the same goal. It is for us to do as much as in us lies that we may hasten the time when in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and when every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.[1]

Safety.

Ps. iii. 3-5.—'But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.'

THESE verses show how much a man may have in reality when he seems to have absolutely nothing in appearance. The Psalmist has described his state as one of loneliness, amounting almost to utter desolation, so far as social relationships are concerned. He seems to be

[1] A. McLean.

alone in the very midst of threatening and desperate enemies. His soul is mocked and his prayers are blown aside by the furious opposition of his pursuers. What, then, has he even in the midst of all this loss and peril and fear? He himself seems to give an inventory of his riches.

1. First of all, he has *a sense of security.* This is evident from the words, 'Thou art a shield for me.' The image of Divine protection under the type of a shield is of frequent occurrence in Holy Scripture. It occurs in the very first book of the Bible—'Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.' In the Psalms the same image occurs again and again: 'The Lord God is a sun and shield,'—these are words which have comforted men in the hour of their saddest distresses.

¶ I have had the strangest Easter Sunday in my life. The battalion were fortunate enough to be in rest over the Festival, and arrangements were made for services in an old barn. The chaplain announced that he would celebrate the Holy Communion, and about twenty of us remained behind. Imagine it! . . . An ordinary table, of crude pattern, covered with a fair linen cloth; rude forms resting on a floor partially covered with straw and chaff; a military guard warming themselves at a fire just outside the door; a few soldiers assembled together, realizing the fulfilment of a promise that He would be in the midst. I have never enjoyed a service so much. We sang 'Jesus Lover of my Soul.' How I love that hymn! Many a time as we walked up the ruined way to the trenches have I sung it, just softly inside. Nobody realizes the meaning of 'Cover my defenceless head' like the boy marching, trudging on with the bullets 'pinging' overhead or 'plopping' into the mud underfoot. This life makes one think. . . . Never out of range of the guns, and never knowing when a mass of metal is on its way to hurl a section into eternity. Then it is that speculation goes by the board, and the small doubts disappear in the magnitude of realizing that there is nothing in the whole world to assist or protect, save faith in a loving God. Then it is that one realizes the great defencelessness, and the fact that there is *no other cover.*[1]

2. In the next place the Psalmist had *a sense of prayer*—he described God as the lifter up of his head. The meaning is that though sore driven, he could still turn his eyes towards heaven, expectant of spiritual deliverance and benediction and that even when his enemies were most heavily pressing upon him he was lifted up higher than any of them—a target to be shot at; but he knew that no arrow of the enemy could strike the head that was Divinely sustained.

¶ In 1862 the whole island [Tanna] was convulsed by tribal warfare. In their frenzy the natives threatened to destroy both the mission station and the missionary. Nowar, a friendly chief, urged Dr. Paton to fly into the bush and hide in a large chestnut-tree there. 'Climb up into it,' he said, 'and remain till the moon rises.' He did so, and, concealed in that leafy shelter, saw the blacks beating the bushes around in their eager search for himself.

'The hours that I spent in that chestnut-tree,' writes Dr. Paton, 'still live before me. I heard the frequent discharge of muskets and the hideous yells of the savages. Yet never, in all my sorrows, did my Lord draw nearer to me. I was alone yet not alone. I would cheerfully spend many nights alone in such a tree to feel again my Saviour's spiritual presence as I felt it that night.'

About midnight a messenger came to advise him to go down to the beach. 'Pleading for my Lord's continued presence, I could but obey. My life now hung on a very slender thread. But my comfort and joy sprang from the words *Lo, I am with you alway.* Pleading this promise, I followed my guide.'

The crisis passed. 'I confess,' Dr. Paton says, 'that I often felt my brain reeling, my sight coming and going, and my knees smiting together when thus brought face to face with a violent death. Still, I was never left without hearing that promise coming up through the darkness and the anguish in all

[1] J. W. W. Moeran, *Illustrations from the Great War*, 39.

its consoling and supporting power: '*Lo, I am with you alway.*'[1]

3. Then the Psalmist points out the fact of his own *enjoyment of the quietness and refreshment of sleep*—'I laid me down and slept.' We are too prone to think of God only as at the head of battles and as leading great hosts in orderly procession; we forget that He giveth His beloved sleep, that He dries the tears of sorrow, and that He does about us the work of a servant, ministering to our life in patience and tenderness and all-bountifulness of love. The warrior who talks about a shield and who rejoices in the lifting up of his head recognizes in the gift of sleep the benediction of God. 'I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.' 'When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.' God will never allow Himself to be excluded from what may be termed the more quiet and domestic spheres of life. He as certainly closes the eyelids of His loved ones in sleep as He makes the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to rejoice.

It is difficult to fit those verses into the theory that here the persecuted Israelitish Church is speaking, but it suits the situation pointed to in the superscription. To lie down and sleep in such circumstances was itself an act of faith, and a sign of the quiet heart which faith gives. Like Christ on the hard wooden 'pillow' during the storm, or like Peter sleeping an infant's sleep the night before his purposed execution, this man can shut his eyes and quiet himself to slumber, though 'ten thousands have set themselves against him.' They ring him round but cannot reach him through his shield.

¶ Being driven brutally from a village where he had just been preaching the Gospel, Sundar Singh sought refuge in a cavern in the midst of a neighbouring forest, and was preparing to spend the night there. Suddenly a band of armed men came upon him. It seemed that his last hour had arrived, and closing his eyes he lifted his soul to God, and prepared to meet Him. A few moments afterwards, to his astonishment and without knowing that anything had happened, he found himself alone. So he lay down and slept peacefully. In the morning when he awoke there was the same band of men with him again; and, as on the evening before, he offered to make the sacrifice of his life. 'Here I am,' he said, advancing towards them; 'do what you like with me.' But instead of laying hands on him these men said: 'We have not come this morning to do you any harm, but to ask you who were with you last evening. We had indeed intended to kill you, but you had so many people around that we could not get at you.' Then Sundar Singh understood that God had sent His angels to protect him.[1]

[1] F. W. Boreham, *A Casket of Cameos*, 144.

Awaking.

Ps. iii. 5.—'I awaked.'

The Psalmist speaks of awaking in the morning after the night's rest. But let us use the liberty of which we see so many examples in the New Testament and apply it to the awaking after the sleep of death. And let us take two other texts with it: Ps. cxxxix. 18: 'When I awake, I am still with thee'; and Ps. xvii. 15: 'I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.'

1. First, then, our Psalmist says, 'I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.' In the application proposed, not to the daily but to the once-for-ever awaking of eternity, this is the grateful acknowledgment with which the roused sleeper greets the dawning of his new day. It is his admiring and perhaps amazed morning tribute, as he opens his eyes on the great world beyond the mortal veil. And observe, it marks with much emphasis two things—the certainty of that event, and its entire dependence on the will and power and grace of that great Lord who is the Lord alike of night and of morning, the Giver of the last sleep to His beloved, and their Quickener in due time from its stillness and its shades.

¶ Silvester Horne was present when his

[1] *A Child of the Morning*, 98.

father died, and wrote: In one of his flashes of consciousness he looked up at me and said, 'I want spiritual rest.' 'Do you?' I asked, 'Yes,' he said; and then throwing himself back on his pillows with a look of content he said, 'And I shall get it.' No one can have seen him when death had come and not feel that he did indeed get it. There was a singular look of satisfaction on his face, and that aspect of wonder and wisdom which the dead so often wear.[1]

2. Now come to the second text: 'When I awake, I am still with thee.' The future awaking is here taken for granted, and still it is anticipated in close and necessary connection with the Lord of Life. But what is now specially presented is not so much His being the sole and mighty Author of it, as, rather, the Friend to greet and the Companion to abide with the awakened one in the new world and strange scenes into which the great awaking ushers him. The leading thought here is, that to the first consciousness in the solemn life to come, the proved and trusted Saviour-God of this life will be present—that, whoever and whatever else may be there, and may then be recognized, the presence of this God and Guardian of the Soul and of all the former life will be realized and rejoiced in, will be greeted not with the startled, awesome words of Jacob, 'How dreadful is this place, surely the Lord is here!' but with the heart-glad utterance of Isaiah, 'This is our God; we have waited for him and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.'

3. The third text discloses one thing more about the awaking, the best and highest truth of all. The Psalmist, in our final text, bursts out into his prophetic and most jubilant strain: 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.' Here the engagement of the Eternal Day to which the sleepers are raised up is 'a beholding of the face of God.' That might have been implied in the former text; but here it is explicitly and emphatically stated; and that is well. There have been on earth real and felt Presences of God where no face was seen; we might, therefore, but for such an ample assurance as is here given, have thought that in a world so vague as Hades is to us, or in a world so dazzling as Heaven is, we might still be with Him and He with us, and yet we not see Him. But now we know assuredly that the newly opened eyes shall 'see the King in his beauty'; that these servants of the Lord 'shall see his face'; that these sons of God, brought to the Father's House, and into the Presence of their Saviour, shall 'see him as He is.'

(1) Now as to this beholding of the Face Divine, it means more than simple vision. It means beatific vision—blessed beholding—beholding that brings light and life. The showing of the face in Scripture is always the token of goodwill, favour and well-pleasedness. To see the face of God is to have the strongest evidence that God loves the soul so privileged. It is to drink in without veil or stint all that is in His Heart of Grace; and if in the dark days of earth, when that face was only seen dimly through a glass, it yet could make exceeding glad—could overspread with health the countenance that had been downcast and tear-defiled—what must it be when seen in heaven, in its full unclouded beauty and benignity, and by eyes made pure and strong enough to gaze upon it openly and for ever?

(2) But there is more than even that. They who have slept the sleep God gives—they who have been asleep in Jesus—shall at their awaking not only behold the face of God, but also wear His likeness. Even here on earth, to see Him through the glass darkly has a transforming influence. 'It changes into the same image.' What, then, but glorious assimilation can follow from beholding with open face in heaven? It is expressly said that the servants who see His face have His name written on their foreheads. Nay, this is the one thing of our future state which the most privileged of apostles tells us we do know and can be sure of. We know not what we shall be: 'but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.'

[1] W. B. Selbie, *The Life of Charles Silvester Horne*, 136.

Even of this known part of our future state our knowledge is but partial. Who can tell all that will lie in the destined wearing of the Divine likeness? But we may safely say—we have Scripture for it—that it will include a spiritual similitude to the Heavenly Father in righteousness and true holiness; and from the Resurrection onwards a personal resemblance to the Son of God, in the fashioning of even our vile bodies like unto His glorious body.

I know that by and by,
I shall be like Thee, Lord, for ever—
Like Thee, as never
A child of Thine may be,
Who can but look on Thee
Dimly, as through a glass, where darkling earth-mists lie.

. . . . . .

I shall be with Thee—all Thy glory sharing—
The perfect beauty of Thy likeness wearing—
Changed into Thine own image—as Thou art.
Holy, and pure in heart.
O, fairest of the sons of men,
I shall be like Thee then—
Like Thee, and at Thy side—
Like Thee, and in Thy likeness satisfied.

How long?—How long?
Is not the morning far away from me?—
Far off the rapture and the song—
The haven where my soul would be?
Who knoweth? Far or near,
What matter? Thou art never far away;
And if I may not bear Thy form to-day—
In such a beauty growing like Thee here,
Yet Thou shalt change me, O my risen Lord—
Even my body—working so in me
That every part may be
Beneath Thine own control,
And Thou the Life, as Thou art Owner of the whole,
And every thought of mine
Attuned to Thine,
And all my life with Thine in glad accord.

Thus, hour by hour,
Strive in me, by Thy mighty power,
Unto Thyself subduing me.
Work, by the skill of Thine own hand
The change too great for me to understand,
O glorious Lord, that I may be like Thee.[1]

Enlargement.

Ps. iv. 1.—'Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.'

Suffering is one of the chief forces which contribute to the development both of the individual and of the race. For is not this part of the teaching of that great doctrine of evolution which is being more and more accepted by thoughtful Christian men as the probable method of God's operation in the world? Life is a struggle, a struggle in which suffering is inevitable; but through the ages there runs an increasing purpose, and the world is being enlarged through its distress.

Look at the subject in those practical aspects which belong to the personal experience of individual men.

1. In the first place, through distress there comes an enlargement of personal character. In this world into which we have been born no character ever grows large and strong except by experience of suffering. It may be different in other worlds; but at all events in a world like ours, a world of evil and sin, there is nothing that elevates, and refines, and dignifies and strengthens character as suffering does. The word 'character' is a Greek word, and comes from a Greek verb which means to cut out, to carve or engrave as with a graving tool. Character is that which is cut out or engraved with a sharp tool: and suffering is the sharp tool with which the work is chiefly done. We have all seen how suffering strengthens character, how it brings to light the hidden qualities of a man, and teaches him courage and endurance and self-reliance. Go to the City and ask who are the strongest men, the men of most character, in the world of business, and you will find that they are not those who were brought up in the easy lap of luxury, and for whom all things were made

[1] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 42.

plain from the first; they are the men who had to bear the yoke in their youth, to face much adversity and opposition, and so to press onwards through struggle and suffering.

¶ There was a great botanist who at one time in his life was exiled from his native land, and had obtained employment as an under-gardener in the service of a nobleman. While he was in this situation his master received the present of a valuable plant, the nature and habits of which were quite unknown to him. It was given to the care of the head-gardener, and he, supposing it to be of tropical growth, put it into a hothouse, and treated it like other hothouse plants. Under this treatment the strange plant began to wither and die. One day the under-gardener asked permission to examine it, and as soon as he had done so he said, 'This is an Arctic plant, and you are killing it with this hothouse treatment.' So he took it out to the open air, and heaped pieces of ice around it, to the great astonishment of the head-gardener. But the result justified his wisdom; for immediately the plant began to revive, and was soon perfectly healthy and strong. The story of that plant is a parable of human character. It is ease, not difficulty, that is dangerous. Put a man under hothouse treatment, surround him with luxury, hedge him in from opposition, and you take the surest means of sapping him of life and power. But teach him to suffer; and you teach him to be strong.[1]

But in a large character, sympathy must be present as well as strength. Without sympathy no character can possess that breadth which is so essential to its perfecting; and there is no such teacher of sympathy as suffering.

¶ Who has not known people whose sympathies have grown larger in their sorrows? They have begun to think differently. As a sick friend of mine, who had never been sick before, said to me: 'My! but things look differently from the horizontal!' Yes, indeed! we begin to think differently about many things, and we begin to think about some things which have never crossed our minds before. We become conscious of grim necessities in the world of which we have never dreamed. We had no idea such things were in existence. A whole world of sickly, suffering folk come into sight. Humanity becomes more than an abstraction; it is a kindred, a brotherhood, and we thrill to new relations as we become the children of a new experience.[1]

[1] J. C. Lambert, *The Omnipoteni Cross*, 58.

2. Think next of the larger and surer place which suffering gives us in the world of men. There is something in the experience of suffering which enhances a man's social influence. In every walk of life the men of sorrows are the men of power. We may not be able fully to explain why this is so; but we know quite well that the very fact of suffering gives a man a claim upon us, and a hold over us, which nothing else can give.

¶ Does not this help to explain the power of a man like the late Dr. Gunsaulus? In a recent appreciation of him we read: The call of a great growing city, and the pathos of its spiritual need, lured him on. As if his church and the institute were not enough, he began a great downtown Sunday evening service in Central Music Hall, which was packed to the doors. At length the inevitable happened. The man of iron broke. Physical collapse—complete and shattering—befell him in 1897, and for six months he lay motionless on a bed of agony. No sermons came from the preacher then, no books; only a poem. That poem revealed his intrepid unconquerable spirit:

I care not that the furnace fire of pain
  Laps round and round my life and burns alway;
I only care to know that not in vain
  The fierce heats touch me throughout night and day.

When he returned to Plymouth pulpit, a quivering sigh, not unmixed with horror, ran through the congregation. A terrible thing had happened. Valiantly he had wrestled with the Angel of Pain in the twilight, and it had left him lame and misshapen of frame. He had been tall, agile, handsome as a Greek god, and now he was doomed to go limping to the

[1] J. H. Jowett, *Springs in the Desert*, 15.

end. One leg behaved like a dead thing. Later, when Lorenz of Vienna tried with his deft fingers to untie the knot, he said with grim Teutonic humour, 'Cheer up! There is no hope for you.' He did cheer up. For, in the fiery furnace of pain Another had walked with him betimes. New windows of insight had been opened, new depths of experience fathomed, and new and haunting stops of music had been mastered![1]

3. But the Psalmist is thinking most of all of a religious enlargement—an enlargement of his heart towards God, and an enlargement of God's mercy towards him. For this is another aspect, and it is the highest aspect, of that enlargement which comes through distress. Sorrow and suffering are great teachers of religion. Philosophers who set themselves to explain the origins of religions tell us that it was the transience of all human things, the pain of parting, and all the dissolutions caused by death, that first led men to turn their thoughts upwards in search of a God. Well that is a mere hypothesis of men who have studied the philosophy of religion; but, at all events, we know that in the actual experience of individuals sorrow has oftentimes proved to be a mediator between God and man. 'Before I was afflicted,' says a Psalmist, 'I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.' And how often the same thing has happened since that Psalmist of the ancient days sang the story of his experience.

Eyes which the preacher's art in vain hath schooled
By wayside graves are raised;
And lips cry, God be merciful,
Which ne'er said, God be praised.

Thus men are enlarged through their distress. Their horizon grows wider and deeper. The sunlight fades, the night falls; but in the darkness a greater and more glorious world appears; for the stars shine out from the immeasurable depths—those 'street lamps of the City of God.'[1]

[1] J. H. Newton, *Some Living Masters of the Pulpit*, 250.
[2] J. C. Lambert, *The Omnipotent Cross*, 56ff.

All as God wills, who wisely heeds
To give or to withhold,
And knoweth more of all my needs
Than all my prayers have told!

Enough that blessings undeserved
Have marked my erring track;
That wheresoe'er my feet have swerved,
His chastening turned me back;—

That more and more a Providence
Of love is understood,
Making the springs of time and sense
Sweet with eternal good;—

That death seems but a covered way
Which opens into light,
Wherein no blinded child can stray
Beyond the Father's sight;—

That care and trial seem at last
Through Memory's sunset air,
Like mountain-ranges overpast,
In purple distance fair;—

That all the jarring notes of life
Seem blending in a psalm
And all the angles of its strife
Slow rounding into calm.

And so the shadows fall apart,
And so the west winds play;
And all the windows of my heart
I open to the day.[1]

[1] Whittier.

Communion.

Ps. iv. 4.—'Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.'

THERE is a rush and haste in religion, and churches too often seem eager to join in emulation as to which can get nearest to the spectacular theatre, and to the thrilling concert hall. We need not wonder that the more meditative themes of religion are not very popular; they lack that highly-spiced seasoning which makes the banquet table of grace an indulgence, rather than the sweet bread of God. Our fevered pulses find relief in still

higher tension, rather than in those meditations which lead us to the green pastures and the still waters.

The Psalmist recommends self-examination, solitude, and stillness.

1. *Self-examination.*—All conviction worthy of the name has its origin in depth of view and feeling, and this is peculiarly true of Christian faith. It has nothing to do with that levity which treats its awful revelation superficially, or with the hasty impetuosity of a passing impulse, which is too apt to be mistaken for real religion. The gospel remedy for sin has been provided to meet the case of beings distinguished by reason and intelligence. Belief in it is morally impossible, unless it be preceded or accompanied by a thorough knowledge of our spiritual condition as sinners who are already liable to punishment, and who are ever ready to go still farther astray. Even this knowledge is by itself insufficient. The Spirit of God, it is true, must shoot into the soul the arrows of His convincing grace, but these arrows are always dipped in an experience which true heart-communion alone can produce. It is when sin in all its forms within us, and in all its influence over us, is seen to be the abominable thing which God hates that the prayer rises up from the penitent heart, 'Lord pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.'

We do not really know ourselves until we see ourselves in the light of God. Communion with Him is an illumination of our nature and tendencies which would stagger us, did it not, at the same time, convince us of His cleansing and transforming power. Every man is a mystery to himself—so unexpected are the latent insincerities and disloyalties of the soul. It is on this account that many a one is surprised into conduct of which he has always felt himself incapable. Crises come upon us without warning, when choice must immediately be made with issues which reach further than mind can measure. In such hours we all act instinctively, and the hidden man of the heart is revealed. The history of many a moral and spiritual tragedy is the history of one who did not know himself, and who, therefore, had not made the Lord his defence, his strength, and his shield.

We are all prone to take too much for granted in regard to ourselves, and to imagine that all is well with us, when all the time there sleeps within us an untamed beast whose savagery may be aroused at any moment to destroy not only our good but the good of others also. If we look into our own hearts, and are honest with ourselves, we shall not fail so to commit us to the Lord, and to submit us to His redeeming discipline, as to prepare ourselves to meet the tests of life and passion worthily.

¶ In Holman Hunt's picture 'The Shadow of Death,' which represents the Saviour as a young man in the carpenter's shop stretching himself at the close of a weary day, and with His outspread arms making the shadow of a cross on the wall, there is a minor feature that is full of suggestion. On a shelf is a collection of books in the form of rolls, such as were in use in those days. They represent the Saviour's library—the books of the Holy Scripture. They are there in the shop where He worked, intimating that in His leisure moments He turned to them to ponder their great truths and store away their principles in His memory and in His heart. No doubt the picture truly represents the daily habit of His life in those quiet years when He was preparing for His great public work. Thus it was that when the tempter came there was no need for feverish haste in preparing for defence. The weapons were ready, and the victory was easy.[1]

2. *Solitude.*—Every soul, if it be true to its privileges is self-contained. It may have God as its guest; and having Him it has all. Into the sanctity of this inner room God may come; as we read: 'If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' Such is the gracious promise given us by Him who came from the bosom of the Father. So a man may stand at his post, and at will withdraw into the pavilion

[1] J. R. Miller, *Setting out to follow in His Steps*, 117.

of peace. One moment he may be in the front line of battle, while death's artillery roars around, and the next he may be in the garden of God. He may be so slashed with sorrow and trouble, that you think the heart of him must break; but that very same man will withdraw into the inner room, and presently he will come out with clear and shining face, with eyes that glow and glisten, as a rainbow does through the rain.

¶ A distinguished journalist (he was a Member of Parliament and knew Mr. Gladstone and had opportunities of watching him closely), in reviewing Morley's *Life of Gladstone,* said this: 'What struck me most in Mr. Gladstone during my observation of him in the House of Commons was his constant isolation from the surrounding scene. There never was a man, perhaps, in the history of the world who had such power of outer activity as Mr. Gladstone, so perhaps there rarely has been a man who has had such a great inner kingdom of his own into which he constantly retired, and in which, amid all this tumult and tempest of outer work, he usually dwelt. And the secret of this constant retiring into himself was undoubtedly his intense spirit of devotion. Throughout all these diaries the thought that is constantly uppermost to the reader's mind is the extraordinarily large part which religion and prayer played in Mr. Gladstone's life.'

A small voice whispered:
'For My Sake
Keep tryst with Me!
There are so many minutes in a day,
So spare Me ten.
It shall be proven, then,
Ten minutes set apart can well repay.
You shall accomplish more
If you will shut your door
For ten short minutes just to watch and pray.'

'Lord, if I do
Set apart ten for You'
(I dared, yes dared, to reason thus with Him)
'The baker's sure to come;
Or Jane will call
To say some visitor is in the hall;
Or I shall smell the porridge burning, yes,
And run to stop it in my hastiness.
There's not ten minutes, Lord, in all the day
I can be sure of peace in which to watch and pray.'

But all that night,
With calm insistent might,
That gentle Voice spake softly, lovingly—
'Keep tryst with Me!'

. . . . . .

Like ice long bound
On powdered frosty ground,
My erring will all suddenly gave way.
The kind soft wind of His sweet pleading blew,
And swiftly, silently, before I knew,
The warm love loosed and ran.
Life-giving floods began,
And so most lovingly I answered Him:
'Lord, yes, I will, and can.
I will keep tryst with Thee, Lord, come what may!'[1]

3. *Stillness.*—In still hours we learn how much Christ is to us. We were tempted to think that we loved Him less than in the tender days of childhood, and in the enthusiastic hours of youth. Now we find how real He is to us. Once we were led to think the words high-flown which described all else as dross, but now in these quiet moments we find and feel that it is true. He has made sure to us the immortal elements of our spiritual being by filling us with Himself. He has fulfilled His promise to send the Comforter. He has made life worth living by quenching the thought of death's possibility as well as its dread. He has given us the vivifying consciousness within which makes the Christian argument not an apologetic but an experience. 'This is life eternal to know Thee.'

Flood thou my soul with thy great quietness,
O let thy wave
Of silence from the deep
Roll in on me, the shores of sense to lave:
So doth thy living water softly creep
Into each cave

[1] Fay Inchfawn, *The Verse Book of a Homely Woman,* 25.

And rocky pool, where ocean creatures hide
Far from their home, yet nourished of thy tide.
Deep-sunk they wait
The coming of thy great
Inpouring stream that shall new life communicate;
Then, starting from beneath some shadowy ledge
Of the heart's edge,
Flash sudden coloured memories of the sea
Whence they were born of thee
Across the mirrored surface of the mind.
Swift rays of wondrousness
They seem;
And rippling thoughts arise
Fan-wise
From the quick-darting passage of the dream,
To spread and find
Each creviced narrowness
Where the dark waters dwell,
Mortally still,
Until
The Moon of Prayer,
That by the invincible sorcery of love
God's very self can move,
Draws thy life-giving flood
E'en there.
Then the great swell
And urge of grace
Refresh the weary mood;
Cleansing anew each sad and stagnant place
That seemed shut off from thee,
And hardly hears the murmur of the sea.[1]

What is the Soul.

Ps. iv. 4.—'Commune with your own heart . . . and be still.'

Shall we hold a cross-questioning with our own souls? If we obey the Psalmist's injunction: 'Commune with your own heart . . . and be still,' perhaps we shall find another Hebrew singer's confession to God to be true for us also: 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.'

Yet at the very outset, an outer door of sense and flesh seems to bar our approach even to ourselves. How shall we knock so as to secure entrance? The way of common-sense is to say, 'I possess a soul.' And the assertion is heavily weighted with uncorrected assumptions. The most naïve of these is that it is the body that possesses the soul. It is, of course, the soul that possesses the body. The body is but the instrument through which we apprehend the outer world. The soul has really a much wider range of activity than the life of the senses. But an equally erroneous assumption in this statement is that 'I' am different from my soul. We correct these assumptions when we say 'I *am* a soul.' For this assertion breaks the spell of the material world which ever deludes us into picturing the soul as just a shadowy impalpable body, filling space and having form and outline like our mortal flesh. The soul is just our personality, our self. When we first uttered that word 'I' in childhood, it was one of the initial acts of will in which a soul was born. And when we say, 'I am a soul,' the door opens, and we are allowed access into the presence of the soul—our Self.

And now our interview with the soul begins.

1. When we proceed to question it, the first response which the soul makes to us is to say *'I am—I exist.'* At first sight, this does not seem to carry us very far. You pick up a stone from the roadside. As you hold it in your hand you say, 'That stone exists.' But can the stone say that it exists? It is only you who say it for the stone. The stone does not know that it exists. But you know—you have the power to think the thought of your own existence. That power makes a difference between you and the stone more tremendous than the difference between light and darkness. Nay, in the very act of saying 'I am,' the soul proclaims itself superior to all the myriads of the dead worlds that people space.

2. We resume our colloquy with the soul. And before we have time to question further, pressing out along with that first response comes this: *'I am myself and not another.'* For is it not the case that whenever you begin

[1] Evelyn Underhill, *Theophanies*, 50.

to think of your own personality, your own self, almost the first conviction that arises in you is that the self speaks from behind closed doors? The soul has an inner life which no other soul can invade or violate. I can tell you about my experiences, and you may understand something of their meaning, because you have had similar experiences. But you do not thereby enter and *feel* my experience. If I tell you 'I am weary,' 'I feel glad,' you may respond with sympathy. But your sympathetic sorrow or joy is not the weariness or gladness that I feel. Yes, right in the inmost shrine of our being the soul says 'I live apart—solitary.'

Thus on the sea of life enisled,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless, watery wild,
We mortal millions live, alone.

3. Our audience with the soul proceeds. And in answer to our eager questioning we are given this further response: *I am myself behind all my experiences.* I love, I hate, I laugh, I weep, but *I* am not the love, the hate, the sorrow or the joy. There could be no love, hate, joy, sorrow, unless behind them all there were an 'I.' All those thoughts, feelings, resolves—that inner life which I tell you about—that is not 'I.' 'I am more than the sum of them all.' How elusive and mysterious this 'I' is proving itself to be! Just when we thought we were about to touch the fringe of its secret, it has escaped from our grasp.

And some have returned from the seemingly vain pursuit, declaring that there is no 'I' apart from the experiences; or if there is anything at all, it is at the most only an idea or motion wandering among our other impressions and thoughts. David Hume, the Scottish philosopher, held this view. I look in on my own conscious life, he argued, and I have never yet been able to catch myself disengaged—free for a moment from all those clamorous and thronging folk, my thoughts and feelings. I find only a room full of guests chattering to a host who is not there! Or else this 'I' that is always talking about itself is just another notion, another guest in the room that belongs to nobody, mingling with the crowd.

To be quite fair, let us give Hume's own figure. He says the mind is nothing but a 'bundle of sensations and impressions.' But he admits that the something that calls itself 'I' is the band that binds the bundle together. Must it not, therefore, be something more than a mere member of the bundle? It cannot be simply one thought among the rest, that is able to comprehend all those other thoughts of the mind. Apart from a thinker, thoughts have no independent life of their own. When John Stuart Mill, the English philosopher, visited Edinburgh, he went to Calton graveyard where Hume's mortal remains lie buried; and looking down at the grave, with a rueful smile he said, 'Here lies that bundle of sensations and impressions that was once called David Hume.' Mill's smiling jest seems to sweep the old sceptic's theory into the grave along with him. Hume's analysis ends in its own defeat.

4. We turn once more to prolong this exciting interview with the soul. And deep in the inmost citadel of its being we hear it say '*I will.* I am free. I refuse to be the slave of circumstance.' And here we seem to see the outside world, which was content to look quietly on while the soul merely said 'I am,' rising up now to protest, and even to mock, when the soul makes this daring claim to come out and invade the world. 'Nay,' says the world to the soul, 'you are a creature of time; you must drift with the stream of time. You cannot put back the hands of the world's clock a single second with your puny "I will." You did not will your own existence. You cannot fight heredity. The very physical features with which you are hereditarily endowed determine whether you are to be criminal, genius, or saint. And you cannot fight with Death and prevail. You may say "I will" as long as you like, but you cannot prevent the approach of the hour when the clock of fate will strike for you. Your "I will" is a great delusion.'

But the soul has its answer to this forbidding voice of crass, brute fact. The soul says,

I never denied that there was an element of inevitableness about life. But the whole history of the human race is the answer of the soul to fate. That history discloses an ever-growing freedom, an increasing mastery over the outer world. The human will, which a few thousand years ago had not resource enough to fashion the humblest tool, has to-day harnessed the lightning, and linked oceans which a stupendous mountain range divided. And the soul, with its 'I will,' can by the grace of God, outreach heredity also. So far from the shape of the skull determining the quality of the soul, there is a power behind the lowest brain in the most degraded of humanity's 'broken earthenware,' which, once awakened by Divine Love, will light up and refine, and even remould the face.

And is there anyone, looking over the achievements of the human race, who will venture to set limits to the soul's claim to be free? Has Duty, that great mistress of the conscience, ever spoken a command to the soul, and received the reply 'Impossible'?

> So near is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man,
> When Duty whispers, 'Lo, thou must,'
> The youth replies, 'I can.'

Yea, when we listen to the soul in its highest moments, we hear a voice which comes from the inmost shrine of the conscience, saying, 'I *must,* I *must.*' Nowhere are we more convinced of the immortal worth of the soul, nowhere are we so sure it is something that wears the likeness of God Himself, as where we hear it say 'I must.' When, in the Christian dawn, we see Paul prostrate on the road outside Damascus, crying, 'I must obey—what wilt Thou have me to do?' When we see Luther defying the Pope's emissary with his 'I must—I can no other'; when we hear Jesus saying, 'I must work the works of Him that sent me.' . . . 'I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!' . . . 'The Son of man must die'; when we see Him at last stretching out His hands on the Cross in obedience to no other 'must' than that, we kneel to adore, and wonder at the heights of possibility wrapped up in this marvellous something called the soul.

5. Here, at the end of all our questionings, we bring the soul into the presence of this Jesus, the greatest of all the souls that History has known. To the Christian He is 'the Truth,' because, when we stand in the presence of *His* soul, we feel that we have come in from wandering in the cold and dark into the presence-chamber all lighted with the radiant certainty of God. We hear Jesus summoning us to believe in God as our Divine Father. We hear Him tenderly proclaiming that there is a place for the least, and the last, and the lost in the thoughts of God. What folly it is for man to dare to consider God as his Father; yea, and what folly—reverently be it spoken—for God to bend over the soul with such infinite care, if the soul is only a stream of sensations and thoughts which empties itself in the sands of time at length, and disappears! I hear Christ summoning me to obey the Divine call. Why summon *me,* if I am but jetsam or flotsam drifting on the tide of Fate? I hear the Master saying, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' But if the soul is merely the shifting phantasmagoria of a dream, then that command is a cruel mockery. As well tell my shadow to breathe as ask me, a mere illusion, to imitate God.

But He will not let me go. Because I have, by my failure and sin, made myself unfit to imitate God, He comes to me with outstretched hands—for of this that amazing Life, that Death, have made me surest of all—He comes to me, to say that God stoops down to offer me forgiveness; and to bid me repent. Can God forgive a mere vapour that appeareth but for a moment and then vanisheth away? And yet, Christ said all heaven hangs in suspense over the moment of my turning back to God. It is in that moment that the soul most truly finds itself—comes to itself, a prodigal in the far country. And the nearer the soul comes to God, the surer it grows of itself. The more intimate its communion with God becomes, the more certain does it become of its own

individuality. We believe in the eternal reality of the soul for this supreme reason, that we see it in the light of Christ's unveiling of the heart of God the Heavenly Father.[1]

What powerful Spirit lives within!
What active Angel doth inhabit here!
What heavenly light inspires my skin,
Which doth so like a Deity appear!
A living Temple of all ages, I
Within me see
A Temple of Eternity
All Kingdoms I descry
In me.

An inward Omnipresence here
Mysteriously like His within me stands,
Whose knowledge is a Sacred Sphere
That in itself at once includes all lands.
There is some Angel that within me can
Both talk and move,
And walk and fly and see and love,
A man on earth, a man
Above.

Dull walls of clay my Spirit leaves,
And in a foreign Kingdom doth appear,
This great Apostle it receives,
Admires His works and sees them, standing here.
Within myself from East to West I move
As if I were
At once a Cherubim and Sphere,
Or was at once above
And here.

The Soul's a messenger whereby
Within our inward Temple we may be
Even like the very Deity
In all the parts of His Eternity.
O live within and leave unwieldy dross!
Flesh is but clay!
O fly my Soul and haste away
To Jesus' Throne or Cross!
Obey![2]

[1] J. A. Robertson, *Concerning the Soul*, 29ff.
[2] Thomas Traherne.

Good.

Ps. iv. 6.—'Who will shew us any good?'

Surely never were words spoken which uttered more truly and more simply the deepest cry of the heart of man. Never was so faithfully summed up the whole truth of our wants and longings. Who does not feel within himself that the Psalmist in this verse tells him what he is ever thinking of, that he knows his inmost secret and his heaviest burden? It is not the cry only of the discontented, the peevish, the murmurer. It is the cry not only of those who are unthankful to God for the goodness He bestows on them, who are never satisfied, who are always wanting change, who, wherever they are, and whatever God's goodness does for them, think that they deserve still better, and give Him no thanks. It is not the cry only of the disappointed—of those who hoped much from life and have found less than they imagined. It is not the cry only of those whose portion of this life's blessings is a narrow and scanty one, who, looking around and seeing numbers richer, healthier, happier than themselves, gloomily ask why their lot is so poor and hard. It is not the cry only of those who have tried all that the world can give, and find it nothing but vanity of vanities. It is the cry alike of the wise and the foolish, the weak and the strong, the prodigal and the temperate, of the honest worker and faithful steward, as well as of the waster of time and strength, the abuser of this world. When we feel that after all enjoyment there is still a want and an imperfection, we mean this. When we talk of the dullness of our life and of the scene in which our days pass, we mean this. 'Who will shew us any good?' It is the drawback in all pleasure, even the highest and the best. It is the bitter penalty of an indulgence which is sin. It is the weary weight which hangs on our common days, and makes them so often look, to rich and poor alike, lifeless and tiresome and unprofitable. It is this craving, never long quiet, after some good thing which we have not. And how shall it be satisfied?

1. Will they show it us who tell us that the great thing is to enjoy ourselves, to have as much pleasure as we can, to be ever reaching after some new amusement and some new indulgence? Will they show it us who would persuade us that work is dull, and excitement the only thing worth wishing for, that the people to be envied are those who have nothing to do but to amuse and enjoy themselves? The world is very old, and long ago it found out pretty well what there is to satisfy the souls of men in idleness and amusement. In thousands of ways it proclaims, in words of sorrow and bitterness, in words of warning and despair, that pleasure-seeking is 'Before, a joy looked forward to, behind, a dream.' And we, personally, know something about this too. We have enjoyed and have not found our heart satisfied. We had our wish to be idle, to be gay, to change our scene, our friends, our employments, yet still the cry was in our heart, 'Who will shew us any good?' The new became old, the bright became dull, the exciting became stale and flat, the sunshine faded, and the days grew dull as before.

¶ You ask for happiness. 'Oh give me happiness,' and they hand you ever new varieties of covering for the skin, ever new kinds of supply for the digestive apparatus. . . . Well, rejoice in your upholsteries and cookeries if so be they will make you 'happy.' Let the varieties of them be continual and innumerable. In all things let perpetual change, if that is a perpetual blessing to you, be your portion instead of mine. Incur the prophet's curse and in all things in this sublunary world 'make yourselves like unto a wheel.' Mount into your railways; whirl from place to place at the rate of fifty or, if you like, of five hundred miles an hour; you cannot escape from that inexorable, all-encircling ocean moan of ennui. No; if you could mount to the stars and do yacht voyages under the belts of Jupiter or stalk deer on the ring of Saturn it would still begirdle you. You cannot escape from it; you can but change your place in it without solacement except one moment's. That prophetic Sermon from the Deeps will continue with you till you wisely interpret it and do it, or else till the Crack of Doom swallow it and you.[1]

2. Will they show it us whose one thought is to get on in the world, and who do get on? Will they show it us who point to the men who have worked hard, have overcome difficulties, have risen by their industry, have made great fortunes, and have become great in their time? Such a life, worthily lived, is an admirable one; it is the life which it is the plain call of God's providence for many to lead. God who made men to think and to work, to strive and to rise, to fight with hardships and to rejoice in success; God who rewards the industrious and the honest with worldly wealth, and who has shown us what great and excellent things men may do with this world's wealth—God cannot be displeased at seeing men thrive and prosper in the world. But let them succeed—what then? Will that success in the end satisfy all that is in the man's heart? Will it bring him all he wants? Will it save him from longing and wishing afterwards? When a man is rich and prosperous, has he nothing more to do than to sit still and take no more trouble? Is he safe against the wants and fears that press down other men?

¶ I don't want to say that there is no advantage, no good in being rich, merely because it is supposed to be the right and proper thing to say so; or merely because, as everybody knows, riches have their dangers in making men greedy, hard, selfish, and forgetful of higher things—forgetful that they have a greater hope to think of than the greatest worldly success—forgetful that they are of the same race and blood as the poor—forgetful that God made them, and made them for another world. But is it not a real thing to ask, whether any man who has got on in life, in a small way or a large, has found it answer all his hopes, has found that it has given him all he wanted, that it has taken the sting out of his unhappiness, and has left nothing for him to wish otherwise, has left nothing which still preys on his spirit and makes his heart ache? Does it save him from

[1] W. E. H. Lecky, *The Map of Life*, 20.

still confessing his secret sympathy with the cry, 'Who will shew us any good?'[1]

Only yestereve, in the waning light,
When the wind was still and the gloaming bright,
There came a breath from a far countrie,
And the ghost of a Little House called to me.

'Have you forgotten me?' 'No!' I cried,
'Your hall was as narrow as this is wide,
Your roof was leaky, the rain came through
Till a ceiling fell, on my new frock too!

'In your parlour flooring a loose board hid,
And wore the carpet, you know it did!
Your kitchen was small, and the shelves were few,

While the fireplace smoked—and you know it's true!'
The little ghost sighed: 'Do you quite forget
My window boxes of mignonette?
And the sunny room where you used to sew
When a great hope came to you, long ago?

'Ah, me! How you used to watch the door
Where a latch-key turned on the stroke of four.
And you made the tea, and you poured it out
From an old brown pot with a broken spout.

'Now times have changed. And your footman waits
With the silver urn, and the fluted plates.
But the little blind Love with the wings has flown,
Who used to sit by your warm hearthstone.'

The little ghost paused. Then 'Away!' I said,
'Back to your place with the quiet dead.
Back to your place, lest my servants see
That the ghost of a Little House calls to me.'[2]

3. Is there no good thing more lasting than the good things of this world, which perish in the using, and leave us still to long for what we have not got? There is such a thing. When a man has done something which he knows and feels to be right and good he has a feeling different from any other in the world. He may have suffered from what he has done, it may have caused him loss and trouble; everything, as far as this world's pleasure or advantage goes, may be against him; he may be misunderstood, and evil spoken of among men; yet he has a witness in his heart that he has chosen the good part which shall not be taken from him. He feels that he has done something that will stay by him and will not pass away when he dies; a thing which nothing can make him regret or wish otherwise, but which he will rejoice in as long as his immortal soul can live and feel and understand; a thing of which the worth and happiness to him can never change or be diminished.

And what is it that makes that so different from any mere earthly enjoyment or earthly gain? It is the goodness that is in it. It is because it has something in it of that goodness which belongs in all its fullness to God, that goodness which He has made our hearts, weak and sinful as they are, admire and feel the excellence of, even if we do not strive after it and love it for ourselves. God is good, and changes not nor passes away; and it is when men seek after and love what is good, when they wish and try to be like God in His goodness and His love of goodness, it is then that they feel that they are following after something which they will never regret or get tired of, never lose or love less than they do now; something which will be in real truth their very own, which nothing can take from them.

¶ You will find as you look back upon your life that the moments that stand out, the moments when you have really lived, are the moments when you have done things in a spirit of love. As memory scans the past, above and beyond all the transitory pleasures of life, there leap forward those supreme hours when you have been enabled to do unnoticed kindnesses to those round about you, things too trifling to speak about, but which you feel have entered into your eternal life. I have seen almost all the beautiful things God has

[1] Dean Church, *Village Sermons*, 3rd ser., 282.
[2] Fay Inchfawn, *The Verse-Book of a Homely Woman*, 29.

made; I have enjoyed almost every pleasure that He has planned for man; and yet as I look back I see standing out above all the life that has gone four or five short experiences when the love of God reflected itself in some poor imitation, some small act of love of mine, and these seem to be the things which alone of all one's life abide. Everything else in all our lives is transitory. Every other good is visionary. But the acts of love which no man knows about, or can ever know about—they never fail.[1]

4. But after all, the cry will still rise in our disappointed and unsatisfied hearts, 'Who will shew us any good?' One only can still the cry, One only can fill up the void that the best of this world's blessings still leaves in the soul, the soul that was created to know and love its Divine Father. 'Who will shew us any good?' One answer only will not be found wanting, the answer of the Psalmist, 'Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.' God, and God's goodness; Jesus Christ, and the love and likeness of Jesus Christ—these are what all human souls are seeking after; seeking blindly, if still seeking their good in sin or in worldliness—but seeking somehow. More than the purest and noblest earthly gifts of God is the light of God's countenance to the weary and fainting soul of man. That can give gladness deeper and more wonderful than we can ever imagine; that can make up for all gladness else shut out or taken away. 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.'

God with His million cares
Went to the left or right,
Leaving our world; and the day
Grew night.

Back from a sphere He came
Over a starry lawn,
Looked at our world, and the dark
Grew dawn.[2]

[1] Henry Drummond.
[2] Norman Gale.

The Light of His Countenance.

Ps. iv. 6.—'Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.'

Our text, though short, is very dramatic. It represents one standing in the market-place, in the midst of the crowd who are pushing and bustling hither and thither, with the one cry on their lips, 'Who will shew us any good?' But he, listening to them, looks calmly upwards and, as the mouthpiece of a few solitary and unnoticed ones among the mutlitude, says, 'Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance.' He is not asking, 'Who will shew us any good?' for he knows the secret they are in quest of, he has found the supreme good, and he has nothing else to desire but this—that more and more God would lift on him and those for whom he speaks the light of His countenance; for this is the secret.

The phrase is a very Oriental one. It is derived from the experience of an Eastern court. The light of the countenance is the expression which it wears when it is pleased. There is a kind of radiance which lights up the features under feelings of satisfaction and pleasure, but which fades away and leaves them sunless and gloomy under feelings of dislike, or hatred, or anger. The wives and courtiers of an absolute Oriental monarch used to watch with anxiety, when they approached his presence, for the expression which his countenance might wear. If his face was gloomy, as his eyes fell on them, it boded them evil; but if he lifted up his head with pleasure beaming from its features at their approach, this was a sign of hope. It is from this that the metaphor of our text is taken; and the meaning of it is, that the secret of true happiness is to enjoy the favour and love of God.

The figure of speech is not, indeed, one for which we care. Its associations are alien and perhaps distasteful to us. But it is not difficult to translate it into its New Testament equivalents. We know on what conditions God is now well-pleased with the children of men. He is always well-pleased with Christ, and with all whom He sees in Christ. This, therefore, in the language of modern and Christian

experience, is the solution of the problem—to have Christ, and ever more of Christ. How is this the solution? How, in other words, does Christ give the heart rest?

1. He does so by taking it off itself. One reason why so many are restless is that they are absorbed in themselves. It is a strange law of nature that, while all seek instinctively for happiness, no one will ever find it who makes it a direct object of pursuit. A person continually occupied with himself is doomed to misery, just as anyone who continues to listen to the beating of his heart or to count his own breathings, will soon be the prey of hypochondria. Those who so utterly despair of finding any good in the world that they lose their reason or take away their own life are always persons absorbed in themselves. And thousands who do not fall so far, but are pining in misery, with the world every day growing blacker around them and their thoughts of their fellow-creatures becoming every day more bitter, owe their despair to the concentration of their thoughts upon themselves.

What they need is to become absorbed in some external interest and do some good to somebody. This is the true medicine of a mind diseased. A single act of self-denial will cause the blue to appear in the darkest sky; and an hour spent in cheering some bereaved heart will dissipate the gathering despair of a life. Now, this is what Christ calls us to. He draws us out of ourselves, and gives us a task and an interest in doing good to others. When the kindness and love of God are revealed to the heart, when the self-sacrifice of Christ becomes the great theme of our joy and hope, a similar disposition is begotten in us; we love all those whom God loves, and for whom Christ died, and we are ready to serve them, because Christ has said, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me. You cannot help thinking well of mankind when you are trying to do them good, and you can never despise any soul if you believe Christ has esteemed it worthy of His life.

¶ Miss Jex Blake writes to her mother, 12 p.m. Don't chide me for writing late, Mother. I must speak to you. If I could give you an idea of the peaceful, happy evening I have had,—sending me to bed with a heart full of love and joy and thankfulness. No, nothing has changed in outer things. I have no other news. But perfect 'peace' has come. I can hardly tell you how happy I am, Mother. I have had such a happy, holy evening with two or three of the girls. . . . And God seemed to give me such wonderful power to help them, and I believe He has helped them. And in all this—I know not how, but I wake up at their departing . . . to find that somehow God has rolled away my burden utterly. I had forgotten it and myself altogether and now I can find neither. I can hardly believe in the pain and misery of the morning, it seems a dim far-off memory. I do not know when I could so fully say, 'I will lay me down in peace and sleep, for Thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety.' [1]

2. But the secret of this rest lies still deeper. Not only does Christ draw the heart off itself, but He also gives it an object large enough to satisfy its desires. In one sense the misery of this world is its glory. The brutes satisfy themselves in the trough, and have no more that they desire. But man captures the rarest and richest joys, and when he has consumed them he is hungry still. It is because his heart has been made too big for the largest satisfactions the world can supply. God made it to be filled with Himself, and it finds no rest till it rests in Him. But the soul that has chosen the favour and love of God for its portion possesses God. It possesses the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Who can estimate all that this implies? How can anyone with such a heritage go about moaning and puling, 'Who can shew us any good?' No, 'the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous'; 'the shout of a King is among them.' Can you conceive a Christian debating the question with himself whether life is worth living? All the resources of earth and heaven, of time and eternity, are at the disposal of Him to whose hands he has com-

[1] M. Todd, *Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, 97.

mitted his happiness. The human heart is large and hungry; but Christ can fill it, and He can keep it full.

Is this wide world not large enough to fill thee,
Nor Nature, nor that deep man's Nature, Art?
Are they too thin, too weak and poor to still thee,
Thou little heart?

Dust art thou, and to dust again returnest,
A spark of fire within a beating clod,
Should that be infinite for which thou burnest?
Must it be God?[1]

3. This is a satisfaction which will never fail, but which will become deeper and more precious at the very stage when all other satisfactions are failing. It is not a wise view of religion which represents it as a substitute for all the good things by which life is enlarged and enriched—such as knowledge, love, health, work, and success. Rather is religion the sunny atmosphere in which all these things are to be enjoyed. It alters the atmosphere. A thoughtful man, however many satisfactions life may yield him, cannot help being haunted by vast and appalling fears, if he knows in his heart that he is not at peace with God. And fear poisons pleasure. No doubt there are good things in this world apart from God, which are capable of giving the hungry heart rest for a time. But will it last? Just in proportion as our nature is strong and large, it is certain that it will not last. Will not youth, with its flow of animal spirits and its capacity of investing everything with the glamour of its own light, pass away? Will not the strength of manhood be broken, and its activities brought to a standstill? Will not friendships be dissolved by the changes of time, and our nearest and dearest pass away into that silent land whither we cannot follow them? Will not dreary old age strip the tree of its blossoms and arrest the pageant of maturity? Will not our last illness and the day of our death arrive? Shall we not have to face the day of account and the long prospect of eternity? What will avail us then, if we know not God in Christ? The heart will go into eternity, still crying in despair, 'Who will shew us any good?' But the heart that has found the secret and the prize of life in the favour and the love of God, as these are laid up in Christ Jesus, discovers its possession to be more and more precious just as it enters upon these solemn passages.

As one who has seen much of illness and of death—who has often had to stand by the side of men and women in those crises of life when the supports on which they lean are put to the test—I bear witness that the love of God in Christ does avail then; God does not forsake His own; He lifts upon them the light of His countenance; and only then do they fully understand how wise is the choice which they have made, and how precious is the heritage which they possess.[1]

O hope of every contrite heart!
O joy of all the meek!
To those who fall, how kind Thou art!
How good to those who seek!

But what to those who find? Ah, this—
Nor tongue nor pen can show;
The love of Jesus—what it is
None but His loved ones know.

Jesus, our only joy be Thou,
As Thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus, be Thou our glory now,
And though eternity.[2]

[1] Mary E. Coleridge.

Sleep.

Ps. iv. 8.—'In peace will I both lay me down and sleep.'

The third and fourth Psalms are similar in style and spirit, and probably come from the same pen. It is not possible to fix their date with any certainty, or to ascertain the precise historical circumstances out of which they sprang. That David wrote them when he fled from his son Absalom is the opinion of a

[1] J. Stalker, in *The Expository Times*, iii. 13ff.
[2] Bernard of Clairvaux.

Jewish scholar who wished to relate them to actual historical circumstances. That they were related to actual historical circumstances and were not abstract meditations there is no doubt, though we cannot now define the exact position. There is a personal note in the Psalm: a man in a high and difficult position declares his confidence in God when he faces the tasks of a new day, or seeks rest after toil and conflict (cf. v. 3). From such utterances we learn that in those days life was no easy affair of leisure and enjoyment, but a continual strain, especially for one who bore the burden of public duties in the face of domestic faction or foreign oppressors.

This man tells us that when he faced the new day it was with a fresh realization of the difficulty of his position and the multitude of his enemies. He not only sees in his mind's eye the great host, but he hears their cry of triumph; they count him a doomed man, and exult in the thought that there is no possible salvation or victory for him. This is always an interesting situation, whatever the merits of the case may be—one man standing at bay against a crowd of snarling critics or dangerous foes. We wonder how he maintains his balance and goes on steadily with his high duties. Confidence in God and prayer for help are here indicated as the sources of strength. God is to him a shield to ward off malicious attacks, the giver of strength and dignity, enabling him to lift up his head in the presence of his foes. The power of prayer has been proved in the critical hour; from the 'holy mount' where God's presence is manifested there has come assurance of help. But help had come in another way, a way that we call 'natural.' He lay down and fell asleep and awoke refreshed, for Jehovah had kept on sustaining him.

How could men keep on with arduous toil and pass through times of severe strain without these hours of absolute rest? When a man is weary, painful things look darker; if he awakes in the middle of the night, when the physical vitality is low, the troubles of the day come back like ghosts in the gloom, but after refreshing sleep, in the light of a new day, the sky is clear and bright again. Is not this also a Divine ministry, this mercy and mystery of sleep? We lie down in utter helplessness, we become unconscious, helpless, and of ourselves defenceless, but in this way God has ordained that we should lose our weariness and find strength for new duties. Surely this is one of the miracles of life; and whether the sentence "He giveth his beloved sleep" is a correct translation or not, it is a noble sentiment (cxxvii. 2). The loss of this common blessing may mean bodily failure and spiritual depression, it will certainly mean unfitness for battle. The courage that comes through this wholesome rest is also a gift of God, and in the strength of it a new hope arises so that this is neither wild boast nor reckless defiance. 'I will not fear the myriads of people that have encircled me, set in battle array.'

¶ The night before Latimer and Ridley lit at Oxford that candle which has never been put out, Ridley's anxious brother offered to spend that last terrible night with them. 'No, no, brother,' smiled the Bishop, 'I mean to lie down and sleep as gently as I ever did.' And to the amazement of the warders who kept guard, he was as good as his word, rising in the morning from his quiet slumber to greet the flames that bore his soul to the skies![1]

Prayer.

Ps. v. 1.—'Give ear.'

This Psalm is a great lesson on prayer—pointing us to its variety as a weapon adapted for all emergencies, and teaching us how to wield it most effectively. We are taught to carry into it the faith which appropriates God as our own. We are warned against the profanation by carelessness or haste of that most solemn of acts—communion with our Creator. We are bidden to send forth our prayers considerately, and to look confidently for results from them. The Psalm drives all slavish fear from our prayers even while it bases our confidence wholly upon the undeserved compassion of our Father in Heaven; and it commends to us intercourse with God as no mere task or

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Golden Milestone*, 20.

duty, but as the dearest employment and the sweetest joy of our lives.

1. There is the variety of prayer: 'Give ear to my words,' 'consider my meditation,' 'hearken unto the voice of my cry.' Prayer is a provision for a universal need, and must therefore be capable of a large variety of adaptations. It is for the dumb no less than for him who speaks; for sudden emergencies no less than for stated occasions; for the closet, but also for the crowd. If a man is to pray without ceasing, he must pray under an endless variety of circumstances. Thus we have here suggested a season when prayer can be deliberately uttered, when one's desires can frame themselves into words. Then we have that which is equally prayer—meditation; that which lies in the heart as unexpressed desire or aspiration, and which indicates a state or habit of mind quite as much as an act. A third of the many varieties of prayer is suggested by the word 'cry'—the passionate outburst of a soul in distress, or dejection, or danger. Thrown out like a strongly shot dart, such prayer has been called ejaculatory.

¶ Ejaculatory prayers, *i.e.*, little thoughts or prayers darted up to God in the midst of one's every day's occupations, increase very much our treasures of prayer. . . . Ejaculatory prayers would, I think, prevent that aching, under which you suffer. A soul which is not often with God in its occupations is, as it were, an exhausted receiver, and aches because it is exhausted, having been away from its Life, God, Who made it for Himself.[1]

2. Next there is the appropriating power of prayer. God is addressed as 'my King; my God.' Our Lord's model of prayer strikes at all selfishness in our petitions. It bids us pray —'Our Father; Thy Kingdom come to us; Give us bread; Forgive us our sins.' At the same time, it does not exclude the personal element. No man is above the need of praying for himself; and God, in teaching us to pray, does not suffer us to forget, in our contemplation of His wonderful provision for the whole body of humanity, the equal wonder of His provision for the individual man, which gives him command of the whole ministry of Heaven, as though he were alone in the universe. 'These little pronouns, *my* King, *my* God, are' as has been justly observed, 'the very pith and marrow of the plea.

¶ When preaching to children from home Dr. Wilson often told Lady Boyd's story of 'Jamie, the Shepherd Boy,' because he found that it 'told' better than any of his other stories. It runs thus: A minister was visiting an ignorant shepherd boy on his deathbed. He gave the boy the text, 'The Lord is my Shepherd.' He bade him notice that the text had five words as his left hand had five knuckles. He repeated the text slowly, appropriating a word for each knuckle, and getting the boy to fold in a knuckle as he repeated each word. The minister told him that the fourth knuckle represented the most important word for him, the word 'my,' and explained personal faith in a personal Saviour. The boy grew interested, and the light dawned upon him. One day Jamie's mother met the minister at her door, and said, 'Oh, come in, my Jamie is dead, and you will find his fourth knuckle folded in, and his forefinger resting upon it.'[1]

3. By the third verse we are pointed to the statedness of prayer. It is well that prayer should be spontaneous; but also well that it should be properly regulated. A rich soil is a good thing; but its richness is no reason why its fruits and grasses should be allowed to grow up in confusion. There are those who seem to think that any insistence on propriety in prayer implies heartless formalism. Not so our Psalm. In the first place, it suggests to us the propriety of stated seasons for prayer. 'My voice shalt thou hear in the morning.' The gospel economy is indeed one of freedom and of spiritual manhood; but, after all, we never get entirely beyond the necessity of rules. We are always the better for the adoption of some fixed lines of life. As the temptations to negligence are nowhere more subtle and powerful than at our closet doors, it is well to fence these with a habit of

[1] *Spiritual Letters of E. B. Pusey*, 33.

[1] J. Wells, *The Life of J. H. Wilson, D.D.*, 291.

prayer at a stated season, on which nothing shall be suffered to intrude. And what better season can be found than the morning?

¶ In the days of the Old Roman empire the gateways of rich and powerful citizens were thronged in the mornings with dependents, each bearing his basket, and waiting for the daily gift of food. So it is fitting that our Heavenly Father's gate should daily witness us at the opening of the day, awaiting our share of the bread of Heaven to nourish us for the day's responsibilities, trials, burdens and temptations.

4. Note next the suggestion of order in the act of prayer furnished by the word 'direct.' 'In the morning I will direct my prayer unto thee.' The original word is used of arranging the wood and the sacrifice upon the altar, which was one of the first duties of the priest as soon as day dawned, and also of setting the loaves of the shewbread in order upon the table. Thus the meaning is broader than that of our version, which conveys only the idea of aiming the prayer, as an arrow, in the right direction. We should do well to cover less ground in our prayers and to ponder their details more carefully. Take the familiar formulas of address, for instance: 'Almighty God, our Heavenly Father!' Stop just here. I am about to pray to the omnipotent and omniscient God my Creator. My destinies and the world's are in His hands. My life hangs upon His will. He is my Father, too. Ah! we shall wait long before we grasp all the wealth of goodness and of love conveyed in that single word—FATHER. We cannot thus weigh our words without a new sense of the sacredness of prayer, and a growing dread of performing the duty hastily or thoughtlessly. And this, too, is a matter which affects our enjoyment of prayer. If it is our privilege to know a man of rich culture and varied learning, we cannot enjoy these by running in each morning for a moment and exchanging a few inquiries about health and a few commonplaces about the weather. Equally it is true that God cannot be enjoyed in hasty, perfunctory prayer. 'He that believeth shall not make haste.'

¶ 'Defecate' is Goodwin's favourite and constant word for the purest, the most rapt, the most adoring, and the most spiritual prayer. 'I have known men'—it must have been himself—'who came to God for nothing else but just to come to Him, they so loved Him. They scorned to soil Him and themselves with any other errand than just purely to be alone with Him in His presence. Friendship is best kept up, even among men, by frequent visits; and the more free and defecate those frequent visits are, and the less occasioned by business, or necessity, or custom they are, the more friendly and welcome they are.' Now, I have sometimes wondered what took Teresa so often, and kept her so long, alone with God. Till I remembered Goodwin's classical passages about defecated prayer, and understood something of what is involved and what is to be experienced in pure and immediate communion with God.[1]

5. This leads us naturally to a fifth characteristic of prayer—expectancy, suggested by the third verse: I 'will keep watch.' As Elijah, when he had arranged the wood and the bullock on Carmel, looked up for the fire from Heaven, so he who has thoughtfully and reverently set forth his prayer before God should expect the answer. He who prays otherwise mocks God; and yet how many pray as one who shoots an arrow at random, not looking to see what has become of his shaft. What becomes of our prayers? Do we look to see whether they strike their mark? When a merchant counts his assets, he counts not only what he has in his storehouses, but what he has sent across the sea; and when we send forth these barques of prayer, laden with the dearest wishes and the deepest yearnings of our souls, is it nothing to us whether they arrive at their destined haven? We are to watch and pray; to watch unto prayer—with reference to prayer; to watch before prayer, that our prayer may be rightly directed or set in order; to watch during prayer, against 'unmannerly distractions'; to watch after prayer, to see what becomes of our prayers.

[1] A. Whyte, *Santa Teresa*, 20.

In the triumph of prayer
Twofold is the spell.
With the folding of hands
There's a spreading of wings,
And the soul's lifted up to invisible lands
And ineffable peace. Yet it knows, being there,
That it's close to the heart of all pitiful things;
And it loses and finds, and it gives and demands;
For its life is divine, it must love, it must share
In the triumph of prayer. [1]

6. A sixth characteristic of prayer is humble reverence: 'As for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy.' It is of free grace, of undeserved compassion, of abounding love, that I am permitted to come. 'Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness,' and I am sinful. 'The foolish shall not stand in thy sight,' and I have been the foolish prodigal who would have his portion, and who has wasted it in the far country. But Thou art merciful; and Thy mercy hath restored me, Thy pardon hath compassed Thy erring child about, Thou hast healed his backslidings and hast loved him freely; and so I come into Thy house, not because of my goodness or strength, but 'in the multitude of thy mercy,' as one whom Thou hast redeemed at a price.

¶ We leave our places of worship, and no deep and inexpressible wonder sits upon our faces. We can sing these lilting melodies, and when we go out into the streets our faces are one with the faces of those who have left the theatres and the music halls. There is nothing about us to suggest that we have been looking at anything stupendous and overwhelming! Far back in my boyhood I remember an old saint telling me that after some services he liked to make his way home alone, by quiet by-ways, so that the hush of the Almighty might remain on his awed and prostrate soul. That is the element we are losing, and its loss is one of the measures of our poverty, and the primary secret of inefficient life and service.[1]

7. And such an approach to God must involve the last element of prayer suggested by the Psalm—joy: 'Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice.' Why should they not? 'Thou defendest them.' On earth, the intercourse of love is often marred by danger; but he who talks with God in His own house, always communes in safety. 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' Shall not God protect His own child in His own home? To talk familiarly with God, to come boldly into His house, to behold His beauty, to question Him freely, inquiring in His temple, to be safe in the shadow of His power, to be sure of His love and mercy, and solidly convinced of His infinite righteousness—well may such an one say, 'Let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.'

[1] Evelyn Underhill, *Theophanies*, 48.

A Morning Song.

Ps. v. 3.—'In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee and will look up.'

This Psalm is obviously a matin song. It breathes the very spirit of the morning, its calmness, clearness, freshness, buoyancy, and purity. It wakes up to devotion and to duty with 'the breezy call of incense-breathing morn.'

The morning is to Orientals the most serious hour of the day. 'Morning' prayers are due from day-break to noon, and before prayers are said jokes are not acceptable; the most humorous and noisy holds back his jokes or imprecations for some later hour, when the sun has dissipated the holy feelings with which the Oriental seems filled in the morning.

Now if we follow the Psalm throughout we shall see what this morning cry is.

1. It is *a prayer for leading and guidance.* It opens with the words 'My King and my God.' It pictures a man with the self-distrust

[1] *John Henry Jowett*, 97.

of a child kneeling at the feet of the great King, waiting for orders, waiting for the word of command or inspiring thought which will make each duty manifest and the path of obedience clear, which will be like a finger-post at the meeting of roads, or a flash of light in the darkness. I am but a fool and blind in the big business of life, if left to myself. Be thou as eyes to the blind. Show me what I have to do, what I ought to do. Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness, make thy way straight and plain before my face, and save me from walking in my own way and calling it Thine.

My voice shalt Thou hear this morning,
For the shades have passed away,
And out from the dark like a joyous lark
My heart soars up with the day;
And its burden all is blessing,
And its accents all are song,
For Thou hast refreshed its slumbers,
And Thy strength hath made it strong.

My voice shalt Thou hear this morning,
For the day is all unknown,
And I am afraid without Thine aid
To travel its hours alone.
Give me Thy light to lead me,
Give me Thy hand to guide,
Give me Thy living presence
To journey side by side.[1]

2. This morning cry is also *a cry for Love Divine.* It expresses the soul's urgent longing for the favour and loving-kindness of its King and God; it is the lifting up of the glad heart to receive His smile. 'My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord.' It makes us think at once of a child's first cry when dawn comes and the awakened eyes are opened on a new day. It is a cry for mother and all that mother-love means, all the sweet memories and hopes which the child associates with that dear name. The Psalmist awakes and cries, 'My King, and my God,' and, like a child, almost lifts up his face to be kissed. He wants to have new proof that God's loving kindness renews itself with each day's dawning, has been over him through the night watches, and will be with him all the new day.

I cannot ope mine eyes,
But Thou art ready there to catch
My morning soul and sacrifice.[1]

3. But this morning cry is also *a voice of good cheer and happy hopefulness.* It finishes with the upward look: 'To thee will I direct my prayer and look up'—away from the sordid dust and petty cares, and ignoble strifes and doleful memories to the heavenly place where righteousness reigns and promise shines and all things point on to the perfect day. The Psalmists, and also the Lord Himself, looked up whenever they thought of heaven. And because we instinctively locate heaven in the pure spaces above us, the upward look has become associated all over the world with the brighter outlook, and the sunshiny side of things, and with the faith, hope and promise which flush the face of life with all its beautiful colours. To thee 'will I direct my prayer and look up.'

Prayer always suggests the upward look. For wherever prayer is, there comes the uplifting thought, the promise of happier things, and the song of good cheer. The downward look belongs to the man who has forgotten how to pray, and has no trust, save in his feeble self and fellow-men equally fickle and feeble. Despondency is the child of unbelief. Pessimism is only another name for virtual Atheism. They are both diseases, for which prayer is the best antidote, and which one touch of Jesus would heal.

¶ There is a wise saying of Henry Drummond's: 'When the outlook is bad, try the up-look.' The art of life consists in paying attention to the right things, the things which seriously matter, and neglecting the rest. Now the things which matter most of all are those spiritual realities which we can never discern until we obey the bidding of the ancient prophet: *Lift up your eyes on high.*

Many years ago the present writer climbed with a friend before daybreak on to the roof of Milan Cathedral to watch the sunrise.

[1] G. Matheson, *Sacred Songs*, 101.

[1] George Herbert.

Standing among the marble spires, they had a dull, dreary prospect. Northward spread the immense plain of Lombardy, all veiled and shrouded in mists; and as twilight slowly melted into a wet grey morning, the travellers told themselves that they had made their ascent in vain. Suddenly one cried to the other, 'Look up!' High in heaven, above earthborn cloud and dimness, there towered a vision of shining Alpine summits—the bastions of Italy—with the snowy peaks of Mount Rosa aglow in the flush of the dawn.

To lift up our eyes on high is the medicine for despondency, the antidote against dismay.[1]

The Shout of Joy.

Ps. v. 11.—'Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice; let them ever shout for joy.'

THERE are multitudes of Christians who have salvation, but not the joy of salvation; they call themselves God's children, but walk about in rags; they live unsheltered while they might be resting under the shadow of His love; they starve while they might be 'abundantly satisfied with the goodness of His house.'

1. Why have we, as Christian believers, so little of this joy flooding our hearts and beaming in our faces? The want of it is a serious loss, a loss to ourselves, and a loss to the world around us too. It is not for the honour of Christ that His followers should so often give the impression that religion is a thing of gloom. Should we not rather show the world how happy Christ is making us? Do we not often speak and live as if He had never said anything else to His disciples than 'Deny yourselves and take up the cross' Restrictions upon our waywardness there must be, and they are merciful ones; but surely it is a poor way of describing the service of Christ when we lay all the emphasis on the restrictions and say nothing of the joys.

¶ If a Greenlander were to ask what a garden is, would it be a true description to say, 'It is a piece of ground fenced in by walls,' and say nothing of the bloom and scent of flowers, of trees laden with luscious fruit, of rest under foliage from the burning heat, and of bird-music entrancing the ear? Or, if asked what a cathedral is, would it be enough to say, 'It is a huge building of cold stone,' and say nothing of its noble proportions, its clustering pillars, its tracery on spire and pinnacle, its glowing colours in the window glass, its holy worship, and its heavenly music swelling through the aisles? Yet such descriptions as these would be more accurate by far than a description of discipleship to Christ which speaks only of its restrictions and says nothing of its entrancing joys.[1]

2. The words of the text are a command. It is the duty of believers not only to be happy but to reveal their happiness—not only to 'rejoice' but to 'shout for joy.' Gladness is here regarded not merely as a privilege, but as a duty. The idea is that a mournful religion is unfitted to attract. The Psalmist wants God to have many votaries. He is annoyed at the fact that men deem the world to have the monopoly of joy. He calls upon believers to counteract that impression. He says: 'Ye who love God, do not let the world think that your love has made you miserable.'

It is said that the man of God gets an entrance into a higher than earthly joy. Doubtless. But why should even earthly joy be consistent with the absence of God? It seems as if the world, like primeval Adam, had stolen God's apples and put them in its own vineyard. The tree of life is His as well as the tree of knowledge. The rivers are His, and the gold, and the dressing of flowers, and the walk in the cool of the day. It is written, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord'; but the joy of my Lord includes the joy of man.

¶ Robert Louis Stevenson, writing about somebody to one of his friends, has this word: 'I will think more of his prayers when I see more of his praise.'[2]

Am I wrong to be always so happy? This
world is full of grief;
Yet there is laughter of sunshine, to see the
crisp green on the leaf,

[1] T. H. Darlow, *At Home in the Bible*, 170.

[1] G. H. Knight.

[2] J. H. Jowett, *Springs in the Desert*, 20.

Daylight is ringing with song-birds, and brooklets are crooning by night;
And why should I make a shadow where God makes all so bright?
Earth may be wicked and weary, yet cannot I help being glad;
There is sunshine without and within me, and how should I mope or be sad?
God would not flood me with blessings, meaning me only to pine
Amid all the bounties and beauties He pours upon me and mine;
Therefore will I be grateful, and therefore will I rejoice;
My heart is singing within me; sing on, O heart and voice.[1]

Defences.

Ps. v. 11.—'Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice, let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them.'

THE trusting soul constantly needs defence, for it is the trusting soul that is most assailed by the enemy. At no time is the Christian immune from temptation, for at no time is the vigilance of the adversary relaxed. And he only can rejoice triumphantly in the midst of all that is opposed to him who has learned to shelter himself behind the Lord's defences, and to stay himself upon the Lord's promises.

Now God's defences are often disguised under the form of life's limitations.

1. For instance, there is *mediocrity*—the possession of but two talents—and the consequent necessity of living a commonplace life. Against this state of things we are often inclined to chafe in envy of our seemingly more favoured friends, but in reality it may be God's defence in the midst of which He has set us for our safe protection. Had we been otherwise circumstanced and more richly endowed, it is possible that headstrong pride might have been our ruin, and that we might have been lifted up to our own destruction.

2. Again, *ill-health*, though often regarded in the light of an affliction, may be in reality, and indeed often is, God's method of defence of one whom He loves, and hence chastens and defends. Rude strength of life, which allows fullest participation in the world's activities, pleasures, and pursuits, at the same time brings a man into peculiar temptations to which the invalid is necessarily a stranger. Many a life has been kept unsullied from the world by that enforced seclusion from it which feeble health has made imperative. When the blood runs warm the passions often run wild, and the seeming limitation of ill-health has thus become a necessary protection from fierce temptation before which robuster lives frequently fall low. You will do well, if such be your case, to recognize your 'light affliction which is but for a moment' as being in reality part of the 'exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'

[1] Walter C. Smith.

3. How often, too, has *comparative poverty* proved God's defence of the one whose life in consequence has been bound to duty and toil. More men have been ruined by affluence and its consequent temptations than have ever been wrecked on the rock of poverty. To the rich man duty often loses its imperative voice, and he tampers with its claims and neglects its fulfilment, while all the time he is breeding greed and selfishness in his heart, to the defilement of his whole life. Against all this and much more the man of relative poverty is defended and kept. There are fiery darts of the tempter which never reach him, and there are phases of conflict which he never knows.[1]

¶ George MacDonald, in his quaint way, uses a simple incident in his child's life to enforce this truth:

My wife contrived a fleecy thing
Her husband to infold,
For 'tis the pride of woman still
To cover from the cold:
My daughter made it a new text
For a sermon very old.

The child came trotting to her side,
Ready with bootless aid:

[1] J. S. Holden, *Redeeming Vision*, 170f.

'Lily make veckit for papa,'
The tiny woman said:
Her mother gave the means and ways,
And a knot upon her thread.

'Mamma, mamma!—it won't come through!'
In meek dismay she cried.
Her mother cut away the knot,
And she was satisfied,
Pulling the long thread through and through,
In fabricating pride.

Her mother told me this: I caught
A glimpse of something more:
Great meanings often hide behind
The little word before!
And I brooded over my new text
Till the seed a sermon bore.

Nannie, to you I preach it now—
A little sermon, low:
Is it not thus a thousand times,
As through the world we go?
Do we not tug, and fret, and cry—
Instead of *Yes, Lord—No?*

While all the rough things that we meet
Which will not move a jot,
The hindrances to heart and feet,
The Crook in every Lot,
Mean plainly but that children's threads
Have at the end a knot.

This world of life God weaves for us,
Nor spares he pains or cost,
But we must turn the web to clothes
And shield our hearts from frost:
Shall we, because the thread holds fast,
Count labour vain and lost?

If he should cut away the knot,
And yield each fancy wild,
The hidden life within our hearts—
His life, the undefiled—
Would fare as ill as I should fare
From the needle of my child.

As tack and sheet unto the sail,
As to my verse the rime,
As mountains to the low green earth—
So hard for feet to climb,
As call of striking clock amid
The quiet flow of time,
As sculptor's mallet to the birth
Of the slow-dawning face,
As knot upon my Lily's thread
When she would work apace,
God's *Nay* is such, and worketh so
For his children's coming grace.

Who, knowing God's intent with him
His birthright would refuse?
What makes us what we have to be
Is the only thing to choose:
We understand nor end nor means,
And yet his ways accuse!

This is my sermon. It is preached
Against all fretful strife.
Chafe not with anything that is,
Nor cut it with thy knife.
Ah! be not angry with the knot
That holdeth fast thy life.[1]

A Penitential Psalm.

Ps. vi. 8.—'The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.'

Even in modern collections of hymns for public worship it is not always easy to detect the principle of arrangement, so as to explain why this or that production should have an earlier or a later place in any particular section of the book. The like difficulty may well attach to the most ancient of all hymn-books, the Hebrew Psalter. The principle, however, seems apparent in the first few Psalms; they are placed in pairs, so as to be mutually complementary and harmoniously contrasted. Thus the first and second Psalms form a kind of frontispiece and illuminated title-page to the whole volume. They present in a striking pictorial style the two chief aspects of the spiritual life, the first displaying the supreme happiness of the godly man, the second showing forth the glory of God's Kingdom and His Church. The third and fourth Psalms, again, are clearly pairs; the third being a morning, and the fourth an evening hymn. The fifth and sixth Psalms are coupled in like manner; the fifth being an-

[1] *Poetical Works*, i. 404.

other morning hymn, the sixth a plaintive night song.

It is the first of the Penitential Psalms. And no more fitting plaint could be put into the lips of any pious sufferer. It is like the minor melodies of external Nature. The wail of the forest, the disconsolate accents of ocean, the monotonous chant of the waterfall, the bleating of flocks among the hills, and the weird call of the moor-fowl among the heather —all these seem to be pervaded with a suggestion of autumn's sadness; and we are made to feel that the nearer we get to Nature the more appropriate become the minor tunes and plaintive melodies of these penitential Psalms.

In this Psalm we have a simple threefold division.

1. *The Divine chastisement:* 'Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure' (ver. 1). As if to suggest the reflection that the chastisement had already been carried too far, the sufferer spreads out his wretchedness in the sight of God's great pity, and paints it in all the sad colouring of the autumn. 'I am withered away'—like a faded flower (ver. 2, RV). As a fragile flower, bereft of the rain and sunshine, I trail my drooping blossoms in the dust. 'And thou, O Lord, how long?' His suffering was a deep he could not fathom; but he spreads it out in the presence of Him who is at once justice and love—like a wounded animal crawling up to the feet of its master, and looking up into his face with great eyes of pain. For, after all, the Divine mercy might triumph over judgment; and the flower that was trailing its blossoms in the dust might once more unfold its petals in the sunshine.

¶ In one of those moods of despondency which at times sweep over all of us it is in the language of a psalm that Jane Welsh Carlyle utters her cry for help. On March 24, 1856, she had resolved, in spite of weakness and ill-health, neither to indulge in vain restrospects of the past, nor to gaze into the vague distances of the future, but to find the duty nearest to hand, and do it. Two days later, she had learned how much she was the creature of external conditions. 'One cold, rasping, savage March day,' aided by the too tender sympathy of a friend, brought back all her troubles, and she writes (March 26, 1856): 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed; but Thou, O Lord, how long? Return, O Lord, deliver my soul; O save me for Thy mercies' sake.'[1]

2. *The Divine loving-kindness:* 'O save me for thy loving kindness' sake' (ver. 4). The reference is to Jehovah's covenant love. He delights in mercy. He is ready to forgive. Let Him be true, then, to His own nature! Let His self-revelation in act be consistent with the inner graciousness of His motive! For, to give another turn to the Psalmist's thought, would not the Divine loving-kindness be deprived of a part of its legitimate praise if the present prayer of the singer should be left unanswered? He would not be found in the land of the living at all. He would be given over to the gloomy abode of the dead; and then the days of praising God's mercy would once and for all be ended (ver. 5). It is a sombre reflection, and prepares one for the truly Oriental description of grief contained in verses 6, 7. Not only did the Psalmist set his bed afloat with his unmeasured weeping, but he melted his couch and wasted away his eyes until they became bleared and dim like those of an old man. The experience was bitter in the extreme, yet it proved to be the darkness that precedes the dawn. It prepared the way for the sudden burst of sunshine with which this penitential Psalm concludes.

3. *The Divine deliverance.* As a flash of light, the conviction has come to the man that Jehovah has heard his prayer. His bodily disease is not yet lifted, the dark prison walls of hostility are not yet removed; but a whisper from the eternities has visited the man's soul, and he knows that the hour of his deliverance has already come. None of his detractors are aware of the swift advent of the dawn, but the voice of the dawn is already in his heart; and he can gaze at the hill-tops

[1] R. E. Prothero, *The Psalms in Human Life*, 345.

now being flushed with the coming glory, and say, 'The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.'

In other words, the song of penitence, like all sanctified affliction, has ended in the assurance of God's covenant mercy. It began quite otherwise. Like a mountain stream it was turbid and broken at the first, but gradually it has calmed and cleared as it flowed, until now, at the close, it loses the voice of its weeping in the assurance of the Divine compassion, just as the flowing streamlet is stilled in the fullness of the sea.

There comes no voice from Thee, O Lord,
  Across the mid sea of the night!
  I lift my voice and cry with might:
And I shall be in sorry plight
If no voice come from Thee, my Lord,
  Across the mid sea of the night.

There comes no voice; I hear no word!
  But in my soul dawns something bright:—
  There is no sea, no foe to fight!
Thy heart and mine beat one accord:
I need no voice from Thee, O Lord,
  Across the mid sea of the night.[1]

Integrity.

Ps. vii. 8.—'Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.'

What is integrity? It is such a state of right intention as allows a man to be consciously right-minded, and to rest firmly in the singleness of his purpose. The man of integrity is a man who stands in the full honours of rectitude before his own mind or conscience. It does not mean that he has never been a sinner, or that he is not now, as regards the disorders and moral weaknesses of his nature, but simply that whatever may have been his life, or the guilt of it, he is now turned, as regards the intent of his soul, to do and be wholly right.

Integrity is often commended in Scripture. In the twenty-sixth Psalm the writer says, 'Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity.' The Proverbs testify in language still more unqualified that 'the integrity of the upright shall preserve them'; that 'the just man walketh in his integrity.' In the same sense it is that good men are so often called 'the upright' and 'the just'—'Mark the perfect man and behold the upright.' 'The way of the just is uprightness; thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.' They are called 'righteous' too and 'right' in the same manner, and it is even declared that they 'shall deliver their own souls by their righteousness.'

The commendation of integrity is not confined to the Old Testament. The Christian disciples of the New testify also to the integrity before God and man in which they consciously live. They dare to say that they have a conscience void of offence, that they serve God with a pure conscience, that they count it nothing to be judged of man's judgment, when they know that God approves. They are so assured in the sense of their own integrity, as followers of Christ, that they even dare to exhort others to walk as they do. And this holy consciousness of being right with God, of being wholly offered up to Him, of wanting to know nothing but Christ, or losing all things for His sake, appears and reappears in as many forms as language can possibly take. They spend their life, as it were, in the strongest confessions of ill desert, and, resting their salvation everywhere on the justifying grace and righteousness of God, they still are able, somehow, to profess their own conscious integrity in their discipleship, and the sense they have of being right and true—whole men, so to speak, in the service of their master.

1. There are, however, two kinds of integrity. First there is 'social' integrity. This integrity relates to matters of truth and personal justice in the outward affairs of life, and becomes integrity only because it is measured by a partial and merely human standard—namely, the standard of the market and of social opinion. Such integrity is always held in high respect among men, and, what is more, it should be. It is really refreshing in this selfish, scheming, sharp-dealing world, to

[1] George Macdonald.

meet an honest man. Whether he be a Christian or not, we love to honour him. But it does not follow that such a man's integrity is complete. All that can be said of him, all that he will say for himself, is that he has had it for his law to speak the truth, fulfil his promises, and deal fairly by his fellow-men. Still it is not, and has never been, his aim or object to do what is right to God.

What does it signify that a man gives men their due, and will not give God His? Does it give one a title to be called humane, that he will not stick a fly with a pin because of his tenderness, and yet will stab, in bitter grudge, his fellow-man? What, then, shall we think of the mere commercial integrity just described, taken by itself? Calling it integrity, it is still integrity by halves, and, of course, without the principle; integrity by market standards only, and not by any standard that makes a real integer in duty. Real integrity begins with the principle, meaning to give everyone his due; to be right with God, as with men, right against popularity as with it, right everywhere, wholly and eternally right.

2. There is, then, a kind of integrity which goes vastly beyond the mere integrity of trade, and which is the only real integrity. The other is merely a name with which men of the market compliment themselves when they observe their own standards, though consciously neglecting the higher standards of right as before God. This higher, and only real, integrity is the root of all true character, and must be the condition of Christian character itself. It is even presupposed in all true faith, and enters, in that manner, into all true gospel character. It does not exclude the grace of Christ, or supersede salvation by grace, but on the human side moves toward grace, and is equally conjoined with it, in all the characters it forms. The sinning man who comes into integrity of aim is put thereby at the very gate of faith, where all God's helps are waiting for him. Now that he is so tenderly and nobly honest, there is no grace of God, or help of His merciful Spirit, that will not flow into him as naturally as light into a window. By this grace, in which he now trusts, his whole being, feeling, aspiration, hope, are invested, and the light of God, the brightness of salvation, everlasting life, is in him—he is born of God. His integrity, therefore, is not any ground of merit, or title of desert, which dispenses with faith, but his way of coming into faith—thus into the helps, inspirations, joys and triumphs that Christ will inwardly minister—in one word, into the righteousness of God. And accordingly the Scriptures formally condition all such helps on the integrity of the soul that wants them. 'Ye shall seek me and find me, if ye search for me with all your heart'—that is, with a whole and single aim. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' 'If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.' The Scriptures, we thus perceive, have no difficulty in finding how integrity is needed in a way of salvation by grace, and there is, in fact, no such difficulty, save as we make it ourselves.

¶ Millet, the French artist, who gave us The Angelus, was addressed at his wedding dinner by his grandmother, who said to him: 'Remember, my François, that you are a Christian before you are a painter. . . . Never sacrifice on the altar of Baal.' And Millet in his answer said: 'Even if they cover the canvas with gold and ask me to paint a "St. Francis possessed by the devil," I will promise you never to consent!'

Everybody needs to take that vow—that he will not sell out. We ministers need to take it. Men in politics and women in society, and those who live under the terrific pressure of self-interest in the business world need to make that vow their own, that they will not sell out. What is finer in history than a soul that is not for sale?[1]

The Wrath of God.

Ps. vii. 11.—'God is angry with the wicked every day.'

How is it possible that God can be both a God of anger and a God of love? That He is both

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 131.

is plainly told us in Scripture. Do we believe in both? Do we not as a rule neglect the one or the other? If we do, we miss the meaning both of God's wrath and of His love.

1. It is easier to believe in the wrath of God than in His love. For two reasons.

(1) The first is: we cannot forgive ourselves. Words which we spoke many years ago, and deeds of which we were guilty, but which have been long forgotten by those to whom they were done, still rankle in our memories and make us ashamed of ourselves.

(2) The second difficulty we have in believing in the love of God is the anger we ourselves feel against those who do great wrong. As we read the story of wrongs done to innocent women and children, of cruelties and barbarities unutterable, there bursts forth within us a burning indignation, a consuming fire of wrath against the guilty men. We demand punishment for the crimes; we will not listen to pleas of mercy; the earth, we argue, must be purged of such corruption.

¶ Writing of the late Dr. J. H. Moulton, the Rev. W. B. Brash says: If it is possible to say that one has seen the soul of a man, I can say that I saw his three times. Once he blazed forth into fierce anger as he spoke of men unworthy of the name of England, who speak of black men as 'niggers.' Again, when he described some temporary horseplay hostility which was practised by some undergraduates against Mr. D. L. Moody, the flaming words poured forth from him like burning lava, 'That was the only time that I was ever ashamed of my University.' The third was when some one told a story of a girl who had been betrayed, and he gave forth a cry of agony which was like the wailing of a lost child on a lonely moor. It was a story told in a Leeds study of what had happened to a girl some years before in London: but he leapt over the years and the miles, and was standing by the side of that girl, and denouncing the infamy of one who had wronged her.[1]

2. God is angry with the wicked every day, and yet He loves the wicked every day. How is that possible?

(1) Some would say because He loves the sinner but hates his sin. But sin is not a thing which can be seen and dealt with apart from a sinner. It is a state of a man's mind—it lies within a man's thoughts and heart and will. It has no existence apart from a person; and one who has fallen below the level of a *person* cannot sin, however brutal his actions may be. A sinner is a person in a wrong attitude of mind. And what is this attitude of mind which works such havoc in the world? At the root, it is selfishness—self-seeking, self-assertion, self-indulgence. It is thinking continually of self, caring for self, working for self.

Now, God is and must be eternally opposed to this attitude of mind. He cannot tolerate it, because He is God, and because this mind which we have been describing is radically opposed to love. It is self-seeking, and love is self-sacrificing. We do not satisfy the needs of the situation by saying that God must necessarily be dissatisfied with sin. We must go further, and say that He cannot bear it, dare not bear it, if He would be God. He can show it no quarter, can have no mercy on it, must by His very nature as a God of holiness clear it out of His Universe. It will not matter what the cost may be to Himself, or to man; He must be rid of it.

Our Lord is speaking of this attitude of mind when He says in the Sermon on the Mount: 'If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.' The word 'evil' means self-seeking, and is set in opposition to the word 'single' in the preceding verse, which means generous. To be self-seeking is to live in the realm of darkness, from which a man of himself excludes the Light of Life. To be out of friendship with God, to be indifferent to Him, to have a distaste for His view of life and to turn away from it—that is sin. For a puny and ignorant creature like man to set himself up in independence of his Creator, to ignore Him, to fight against Him, and seek to have his own way—that is not merely ludicrous, it is sin. Sin is self-centredness.

[1] W. B. Brash, *Letters to 'The Happy Warrior,'* 28.

(2) The true answer is that the wrath of God is itself love. The love of good men or women for their children, as every good man or woman knows, is not an easy-going, soft-hearted good-nature. It is not a pampering and defending and excusing of them in their faults and blunders and excesses. It is righteousness aglow with the fire of love. It is goodness in full activity in order to make their children good. Love never shrinks from causing pain to one who has done wrong; it speaks out firmly; it is sharper than a two-edged sword; it is not afraid of causing suffering, but only of leaving the root of evil in the wound. In all this it suffers more pain than it causes, but it takes no account of the price it may have to pay. Love will pay anything, endure anything, inflict anything, if only it can save the one beloved.

¶ God's scoldings, then, are but the sign of a strong love under the guise of a stern corrective. God is love, and *because* He is love He can scold. God *is* angry when a man deliberately ruins a woman's life, or a woman callously spoils a man's happiness. God *is* angry when a child is taught the knowledge of evil without being taught '*how* to refuse the evil and choose the good'; when his responsible guardians send him out into the world of school, or business, or society, into the lonely lodging, or swarming beehive, all unwarned against the wolf in sheep's clothing. God *is* angry at the doubtful story with the double meaning; at the sneer at that which is pure and modest; at the luscious passing on of some unverified scandal. Against such the Lord does 'thunder out of heaven,' and we thank Him—we even ask Him—for it. Like Samuel, we can say both for others and for ourselves: 'I will call unto the Lord, and He shall send thunder that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great.' And, like Samuel, we can welcome the result: 'And the Lord sent thunder, and all the people greatly feared the Lord.'[1]

¶ A man's wrath against sin is strongest against those whom he has trusted, and is at its fiercest against those whom he has loved and who have outraged him. The word wrath does not at all describe the feeling we have at the crime of an unknown man in a foreign land. The crime of a son or a daughter stirs us to the very depths of our being. We feel the shame of it, perhaps the ingratitude of it, and there is also wrath. King Lear's indignation against his two daughters, to whom he has handed over all his power and wealth, but who turn him in his old age from their door out into the pitiless storm, is surely the utterance of the common heart of man:

I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,
You owe me no subscription; then let fall
Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak and despis'd old man.
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters join'd
Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul.[1]

[1] E. E. Holmes, *The Days of the Week*, 55.

A Quenchless Fire.

Ps. vii. 11.—'A God that hath indignation every day' (RV).

1. Our sacred fire does not burn every day. It burns only intermittently. It has occasional flares, when it leaps up with fierce intensity, but it soon dies down and smoulders, or goes quite out. It is like a bonfire of tarred wood; it has a spasm of fervency, but no steady and continual glow. When the revelation of some moral outrage first appears we burn with hot antagonism. But if the outrage continues, and we become accustomed to its presence, our healthy indignation begins to subside. Our very familiarity with an evil is apt to damp our fires. The very evil which kindles our anger smothers it by its continuance.

All of which means that there comes a stage when our holiness ceases to be shocked at the presence of the unholy. Our holiness is not healthy enough, and therefore not sensitive

[1] G. Steven, *The Warp and the Woof*, 136.

enough, to retain its power of repulsion. It does not possess a glorious sense of offence. It is not strong enough to maintain its distance. What it first loathed it now tolerates, and it is almost inevitable that when we tolerate a wrong we begin to fraternize with it. In this realm the absence of antagonism means the birth of fellowship. Friendly messages pass between the trenches and we begin to cherish what we were intended to destroy. Our very presence, which should have consumed the evil, quickens it, just as a congenial climate fosters some deadly plague.

¶ If you are impious enough to tolerate darkness, you will get ever more darkness to tolerate; and at that inevitable stage of the account (inevitable in all such accounts) when actual light or else destruction is the alternative, you will call to the Heavens and the Earth for light, and none will come![1]

2. Now God's holiness is altogether different. His indignation never burns low in the presence of wrong. When iniquity raises its head His light is always lightning. 'Out of the throne proceeded lightnings!' God's holiness never tolerates sin. His holiness never becomes so lukewarm as to be amiable to seemingly small revolts. 'Whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments!' It is jealous for fidelity in small affairs. It is angry with the infidelity that shows its face in the apparent trifle. And why? Because the spirit of outrageous sin can enter the sacred circle through a neglected scruple. The burglar can get into the house through a little unfastened window in the scullery. Smallpox may be spread by a penny as well as by a pound note. And it is little use our working up indignation against mighty epidemics if we are coldly negligent about the single germs. But this also is one of our dangers. Our fires blaze in crises, but they do not burn against the smaller things which make them. Our indignation does not burn every day either against great wrongs which have become familiar, or against the lesser wrongs which are the breeding beds of more sensational sins. 'God hath indignation every day!' In the presence of wrong God is always aflame. 'Our God is a consuming fire.' He will not parley with sin, but He will burn it in unquenchable fire.

¶ Most signally of all, this abhorrence of evil comes out in Him of Whom it is written, 'Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.' It is this, you will observe, which is avouched of Him, namely, that He *hated* wickedness; it was not merely that He kept Himself aloof from it, passed it by, had nothing to do with it; but that He *hated* it. His whole moral nature was in active and continual warfare with it. 'Get thee behind Me, Satan,' uttered once to the adversary in the wilderness, was the voice of His heart at every instant, was the keynote to which His whole life was set. The zeal of His Father's house consumed Him, so that, though once only, or at most twice, He may have driven out the profane intruders from the Temple of His Father, yet the spirit which dictated these outbreaks of holy zeal was the spirit in which His whole life was lived, His whole ministry was accomplished. Ever near to His heart was the holy indignation which He felt at the dishonour done to His Father's name; the holy hatred which He felt, not of the world, for that was the object of His tenderest pity, but of the pollutions of the world, in the midst of which He was moving; and in His entire exemption from which pollutions He was 'separate from sinners,' though united to them in everything besides.[1]

If we would share God's holy fire, we must share His holiness. If we would share His holiness, we must be partakers of His love and grace. To be greatly angry we must have the power to greatly love. 'He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.'[2]

[1] Carlyle, *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, 110.

[1] R. C. Trench.
[2] J. H. Jowett, *Springs in the Desert*, 20ff.

Stars and Children.

Ps. viii. 1, 2.—'Thou hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength.'

So God has two witnesses, a star-bespangled sky and a newborn human soul. And the second is the more convincing of the two.

1. Stars come first and children follow. This is the order in the Psalm; the order, too, in the Creation story of Genesis; and the order in all true scientific thought. Wise and earnest students are sure that matter must anticipate mind, that the house must be prepared beforehand for its tenant, and that the universe must be shaped and fashioned into readiness for the coming of the soul. If the process were reversed, it would be a descent instead of an upward march. Starting in the spiritual, it would dwindle and decline to the material and temporary. The degeneracy would be unnatural in human craftsmanship; it is inconceivable when the Worker is Divine. That is never God's way. He builds the home, making it spacious and wealthy and exceeding magnifical; and then He leads in the child, who is to enjoy and use the home.

2. Stars are dumb, while children speak. Our singer considers the heavens, but he hearkens to the babes. The one is spread out before his eyes; the other addresses his ear, and through the ear his deepest spirit. The gleaming and multitudinous worlds that light up the nightly sky do speak indeed. The heavens declare the glory of God, so another Psalm puts it, and their words are gone out to the end of the world. But not of their own initiative have they anything to say, not of themselves. It is we who give them their language. We are their interpreters. Without us to ponder and explain them, the 'thick inlaid' 'patines of bright gold' would be devoid of tongue and message. Personal thought they have none. Ours are the thought and utterance by which to discover and describe their manifold revelation of God. Thus the reader is greater than the book; and the soul, stirred to worship and thankfulness by the star, transcends the very star which wields the hallowing influence. And when the soul seeks God and finds Him, it holds a blessedness in its bosom, and it sings a song with its lips, to which no music of the spheres can be compared. A child of four or five summers may learn the gospel, and may publish it in simple accents of his own; and then how unreckonably he outruns Arcturus and the Pleiades!

¶ One evening a little girl went to her father with a troubled face, and quivering lip, and said, 'Papa, is God dead?' He was a Christian man, but had grown cold in his Christian life. One evidence of it was that family prayers, in which he had once been faithful, had been omitted entirely. When the troubled face looked up into his with the strange question, he was surprised, and said, 'Why, no, dear, why do you ask such a question?' 'Because you never talk to Him any more the way you used to do.' And the little unconscious preacher for God, with her troubled eyes led her father into a new life.

A little fellow was just learning to spell, and was eagerly using his new knowledge all the time. His father was an infidel of the common sort that boasts of the infidelity and tries to push it on others. He had hung up a motto on the wall of his house. It read, 'God is nowhere.' The child's eye wandered to the motto, and he commenced spelling: 'G-o-d God, i-s is, n-o-w now, h-e-r-e here. God is now here.' If a voice had suddenly spoken out of the clouds the father could not have been more surprised at the new meaning of his motto, nor more startled in spirit. His early training had been Christian. The result was that he adopted his son's spelling for life.[1]

3. Stars are made and completed, but children press on in a progress without boundary and without end. The heavens are fixed. The worlds sprinkled over them like grains of glittering dust have reached their goal. The telescope, it is true, discloses change and upheaval within their borders; but

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 197.

this is merely the alteration of contour, of climate, of phenomena, on mountain and plain, on land and sea. Probably the movement is always towards dissolution, for matter travels insensibly but really to decay and death; and it will require a stupendous renovation, and a Divine purifying, to bring in the new heavens and new earth which will not vanish away. Stars have their appointed limits, and may not last in perpetuity. But souls are different. They do not, they cannot, die. They are dowered with the awful prerogative of immortal existence. When they are Christ's, they are as free from decay as from death. Their possibilities of advance in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, are immeasurable. If there is a grave for the body, there is none for the soul; the body's death but liberates the soul, so that it can wing its unimpeded flight to its true rest, the haven of its desire, the fold from which it will go out no more. 'Man has for ever.' The stammering and prattling child may be on a pilgrimage from strength to strength, from wisdom to wisdom, from grace to grace, from endowment to endowment—a pilgrimage which has neither termination nor horizon, and which should have no check or change or fall.

Is matter indestructible—and Thought,
Matter's high sovereign, Lord of Life and Death,
Made of a stuff which tamely perisheth,
Like tender creature, dead at birth, the sport
Of callous nature who in scorn hath caught,
As soon as granted, the capricious breath
From infant lips? 'Not thus,' my bold heart saith,
'Do thy soul's yearnings spend themselves for naught,
But grandly speeding thro' the realms of space,
They seek some goal, some mission execute
For human weal, or whisper to a race
Unknown of man, some mystic hints that shoot
Within the brain and speak of other place
Where richer hopes and powers yield choicer fruit.'[1]

[1] A. M. P. Dawson.

4. Stars look down, while children look up. That is a memorable sentence of Augustine's Confessions in which the penitent and praying saint portrays the fatal mistake of the years he spent in separation from God. 'I had my back to the Light,' he says, 'and my face to the things enlightened; wherefore my face itself was not enlightened.' This is how it is with the stars. Their backs, so to speak, are toward Him who is Light, and their faces are towards the things He enlightens; therefore they are compelled to miss the Master Light themselves. They are on the verge of the Infinite; but their gaze is turned from the Throne and the King to the worlds which His fingers have made. Downward and outward they look upon the many-coloured universe, rather than upward to Him who thought the universe into orderliness and rhythm and beauty. Souls are born within the sphere of the finite; but theirs is the capacity to rise and mount and soar, farther and farther into the Infinite. 'In God's breast, their own abode, the dazzling shoals of glory passed,' they must lay themselves down; or they will be eternal wanderers and exiles. And while we who have grown old, and are to-day sceptical and selfish and sinful, need to be driven home through Valleys of Humiliation, by startling providences and shattering sorrows, the children are drawn heavenward easily and quickly. A word, a touch, is enough; and at once they are across the threshold and inside the shady City of Palm-trees. Stars look down without the sense of impoverishment; but children look up, for they are bankrupt apart from Father, Son, and Spirit.

Spirit of Childhood! loved of God,
By Jesu's Spirit now bestow'd;
How often have I longed for Thee;
O Jesus, form Thyself in me!

And help me to become a child
While yet on earth, meek, undefiled,
That I may find Thee always near,
And Paradise around me here.[1]

[1] Gerhardt Tersteegen.

5. Stars preach God's power, but children illustrate His grace. The grace is greater than the power. Omnipotence conceives and creates and sustains the worlds upon worlds which fill the depths of space. But it demands a condescension and a love which are mightier than Omnipotence to pardon, and to keep, and to perfect a single soul. The weakness of God, as we see it in Bethlehem and on Calvary, is stronger than His strength, when the silver of the moon streams in at our windows and Orion and the Bear are 'bright in air.' It accomplishes what the magnificence of the stars can never effect, because it bends our will, and subdues and allures us, till we are altogether His Own. The child and the man who has become a child are led captive by it.

¶ In one of his letters Adolphe Monod relates that, in a London school for orphan girls, he heard the hymn sung, 'All hail the power of Jesus' Name!' It was too much for him. 'My weak heart gave way, and I could but weep instead of singing. I felt that Jesus Christ is the true God, the living God, because He is the God of little children. The whole of sacred criticism,' he continues, 'is not worth my tiny vis-à-vis of six years old opening her mouth, and saying to angels, Jews, Gentiles, and Christians, "And crown Him Lord of all!" ' It is not given to Aldebaran and Sirius to grasp and to repeat such wonders of grace. Once a star guided some seekers, across deserts and mountains, to where the Saviour lay; but it stayed outside, while they went in, and knelt at His cradle, and yielded Him not only their gold and frankincense and myrrh but themselves as well. It can so publish His power that 'an undevout astronomer is mad'; but it is a stranger to the redemption which He bestows on every meek and childlike heart.[1]

Considering the Heavens.

Ps. viii. 3.—'When I consider thy heavens.'

The 8th Psalm is the first of a number of Psalms which celebrate the praise of God in the phenomena of the natural world. The sun by day in the 19th Psalm, the moon and the stars by night in this Psalm, the thunderstorm —more impressive often in Palestine than with us—in the 29th Psalm, the harvest, as evidencing God's care for His creatures, in the 65th Psalm, the glory and order of Creation in the 104th Psalm, are all dwelt upon by the Hebrew poets, and described with a force, an animation, a wealth of imaginative colouring which have never been surpassed. But the Hebrew odes are never merely descriptive. Nature is never regarded in them as an end in herself. She is an instrument in the hand of God, the means by which He manifests His powers. The sense of God's presence, of which the Psalmists are so profoundly conscious in their own spiritual life, is that which gives its glory and its meaning to the natural world. Their vivid realization of God's presence, as of a presence which fills the world, and from which there is no escape, is impressed upon their poetry of Nature. Nature is instinct with the marks and evidences of His glory. The sun and the moon are His witnesses and heralds, the light is His robe, the storm-cloud is His chariot, within which He rides shrouded in light, the thunder is His voice, the lightning flashes are the partings of the cloud revealing glimpses of the brilliancy shining within. Admiration of Nature is a confession of the glory and power of God which are stamped upon it.

As men consider those heavens they have their various thoughts. What one makes of the heavens will depend on what he makes of the world which touches him more nearly, and this again will depend upon his personal faith. But there are various answers; the heavens provoke various emotions in human hearts—nay, the heavens may provoke various feelings in the same heart, according to the mood and experience of the moment.

1. When I consider the heavens I may feel, as the Psalmist felt, that it is none too vast or great for the great soul of man which God haunts and visits. As I look into the heavens I may feel their greatness to be a call from God myself to live greatly; I may feel it all as God's reinforcement of the Divine within me, as God's alleviation of some mean dis-

[1] A. Smellie, *Out of the Desert a Gift*, 212.

tress, as God's assurance that His purpose holds, that on the deeper level all is and will be well. On the other hand, when I consider the heavens in some hour when, it may be, in consequence of some moral failure or slackness on my own part, I am disposed to think meanly of man, then those heavens may seem to me to be full of contempt for man, full of laughter at his purposes and small agitations. What is man that he should have his notions, when above him and beneath the heavens yawn infinitely? Here, as everywhere, we impute ourselves. We see what we are disposed to see. Seeing is believing. When I consider the heavens I simply utter the true voice of my heart—my longing, my faith, my doubt.

¶ 'Look at that sky,' said Leigh Hunt to Carlyle, as they stood on Hunt's doorstep; 'look up into those depths, the majesty, the silence, the orderliness; and can you longer doubt God's power and care?' Carlyle looked up as he was bidden, and after a moment, still looking up, sighed: 'It's a sair sicht!' Both men were revealing their soul.[1]

2. But when I consider the heavens I remember that Jesus Christ also considered them. He looked up into those stars which in certain hours seem to mock us, which seem to despise our hopes and to confirm our fears. He looked up into them, and they meant for Him—only God the Father everywhere and near. Now that means everything for me. I believe in Jesus Christ. I believe in His vision of God. I know that the heavens, representing all that lies beyond our knowledge, have had various interpreters. I know that the interpretation which one gives is the one to which man's heart with all its experiences disposes him.

I find, then, one pure and holy soul appearing for a time among the puzzled sons of men. He entertained no selfish aim, He had not sinned, and thus was free of that private trouble and harassing of the mind which comes of a painful memory. I find such a One, and He declares to me—God the Father, Life the discipline and means of Grace, and by the logic of His own high faith the Future a house of redeemed souls with God. I meet this glorious and unperplexed One as I journey through life; I take His evidence on the unseen and the unknown who alone had the unsoiled and perfect soul to see the unseen, and to interpret the unknown, on behalf of man. And, believing Christ, my heart comes into peace—not the peace of the indolent, but the peace of true manhood, the peace which one has who has a supreme purpose and, in the silent places of his soul, a faith which offers and demands a life of faith, of goodness and of love. In short, I cannot even begin to 'consider the heavens' until I take up a certain point of view.

Jesus Christ assures me of God the Father. I find God in Him; and with that faith held meekly, indeed, as becomes us, but firmly, the heavens—the unknown, the unexplored things—no longer shake and overwhelm my soul, but unite with Christ's own sublime voice to urge me to maintain in life the serious and believing mood.

The heavens above are clear
In splendour of the sapphire, cold as steel,
No warm soft cloud floats over them, no tear
Will fall on earth to tell us if they feel;
But ere the pitiless day
Dies into evening grey,
Along the western line
Rises a fiery sign
That doth the glowing sky incarnadine.[1]

[1] J. A. Hutton, *On Accepting Ourselves*, 67.

Man and the Universe.

Ps. viii. 3, 4.—'When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?'

THE language of the Psalmist here shows us that some of those questions which still perplex us in seeking to bring God's truth into one consistent whole have been raised long ago, and are as old as the soul of man. The Psalmist could have had but a small conception of the magnitude of creation as compared with that which dawns on us through the

[1] Dora Greenwell.

power of the telescope and the calculations of astronomy; but the insignificance of man as the subject of Divine interposition and care filled him with wonder and awe. Amid the amazing extension of our knowledge of the universe through the discoveries of modern science, this wonder has taken the form of an objection against the gospel, openly expressed by some, and felt in different degrees by many more. It is that the gospel revelation is out of proportion to the magnitude of creation as now certainly known. That objection takes one of two shapes—either that man, looked at in the light of such a universe, is too insignificant for this interposition; or that God is too exalted for us to expect such an interposition from Him.

1. As regards man, the professed aim of the gospel is his deliverance from spiritual error and sin, and his introduction to that which alone can satisfy the wants of his nature—the favour and fellowship of the God who made him. This is a sphere of action entirely different from astronomy, and, at its very first step, as much higher as mind is above matter. It is the presence of life—above all, of intelligent life—that gives significance to creation, and that stands, like the positive digit in arithmetic, before all its blank ciphers. The most beautiful landscape wants its chief charm till we see, or fancy in it, the home of man.

This may be charged as egotism, but it is the law of our being by which we must judge the world. We must look out on God's universe with the eyes and heart that its Maker has bestowed upon us, and we must believe that they were meant to guide us truly. The eras of geology receive their interest as they become instinct with animation, and as they foreshadow the entrance of the intelligent mind which was at last to appear among them to be their interpreter. It is the reason of man which has reconstructed them out of their dead ashes. It is that same reason which gives to the present living world all that it has of meaning and of unity. The forms of beauty and grandeur which matter puts on are only the clothing furnished by mind. The Alps and Andes are but millions of atoms till thought combines them, and stamps on them the conception of the everlasting hills. Niagara is a gush of water-drops till the soul puts into it that sweep of resistless power which the beholder feels. The ocean, wave behind wave, is great only when the spirit has breathed into it the idea of immensity. If we analyse our own feelings, we shall find that thought meets us wherever we turn. The real grandeur of the world is in the soul which looks on it, which sees some conception of its own reflected from the mirror around it—for mind is not only living but life-giving, and has received from its Maker a portion of His own creative power. It breathes into dead matter the breath of life, and 'it becomes a living soul.'

¶ An interesting writer has told us how the thought came home to him one spring day as he walked near Siena and saw a lovely lizard curled up in a warm corner by a wall. He marked the beauty of the creature; and as he did so he wondered if anyone else had seen it. And then he thought of all the vast portions of the universe, or even of the world, which the eye of man had never seen. Were they then unseen? Doubtless they all existed to the mind of God; but it pleased him also to think that there might be other spectators—the angels—part of whose existence might consist in beholding the fair beauty of creation, so that no desert flower should be 'born to blush unseen.' The thought will not appear extravagant to any but a mere materialist; but if the beauty of the universe exists for God, and for the sons of God, who may still 'shout for joy' as when the morning stars first sang together, we must remember that it is given to man to share with God and the angels the power of seeing and loving beauty. For beauty—whether it be the splendour of the starry heavens or the glitter of an insect's wing—must have someone to perceive it who knows what beauty is, or else its very existence is null; it does not exist for so many billions of miles of mere space—nay, space itself does not exist except for the mind which comprehends it and imposes its own forms upon it—but it is given to man to share in the delight which beauty gives, which it

must give, to the Eternal mind; and since this is so, we may say, quite as confidently now as was said in Genesis itself, that man has upon him the image of the Eternal—'the image of God.'[1]

2. The second form which the objection may take is that as the gospel revelation sets man in a rank that is too high, so does it bring God too low. Is it credible, it may be asked, that the all-extending infinite Power which these worlds on worlds disclose can enter into union with human nature, and take that place on our earth which the cross and the grave of Jesus Christ reveal?

Perhaps there may be over-boldness on both sides in the argument as to what we may expect from God, but, provided we do not degrade His moral attributes, the presumption is likely to be in anticipating not too much, but too little. All that we know of God leads us not to set limits to any side of His character, and certainly it is not the discoveries of astronomy that should teach us to circumscribe Him. We see in the sky the hand of a Being infinite in power and wisdom; and is it rational, because of this, to restrict Him in His display of goodness and mercy? He is so great in the heights of heaven, therefore He cannot be so great in stooping to misery and sin! This may apply very well as a standard to some kinds of men, but it is not the standard for the noblest, and least of all can we take it is a measuring-line for God. There is more philosophy in the feeling of the Psalmist that God's greatness is the measure, not of His distance from, but of His nearness to, us. 'As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him' (Ps. ciii. 11).

¶ There is a striking passage in Hanna's *Memoirs of Dr. Chalmers.*[2] At the General Assembly Meeting of 1816 Chalmers was appointed to preach before the Lord High Commissioner. At so early an hour as nine o'clock in the morning a crowd began to gather in front of the High Church, which long ere the doors were opened was manifestly greater than any church could contain, so that when entrance at length was given, in one tremendous rush, hazardous to all and hurtful to many, pews and passages were densely filled. It was with the greatest difficulty that the Commissioner, the Judges, and the Magistrates reached their allotted seats. Dr. Chalmers's text on this occasion was—(Ps. viii. 3, 4)—'When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?' Having strained every imagination to the utmost, by carrying his audience up to and abroad over those vast fields of space, teeming with unnumbered worlds, which science had brought within the circle of her discoveries—'What,' asked the preacher, 'is this world that we inhabit, in the immensity above and around it, and what are they who occupy it? We give you but a feeble image of our comparative significance when we say that the glories of an extended forest would suffer no more from the fall of a single leaf than the glories of this extended universe would suffer though the globe we tread upon and all that it inherits should dissolve.' The infidel objection, grounded upon the unlikelihood that upon a theatre so narrow and for a race so insignificant such high and distinguishing attentions should be lavished as those which Christianity describes was then stated in its full strength. Argument after argument in refutation of it was advanced. 'The attention of the auditory,' we are informed, 'was so upon the stretch, that when the preacher made a pause at the conclusion of an argument, a sort of sigh, as if for breath, was perceptible through the house.' 'Thirdly, said Dr. Chalmers, renewing, after one such pause, his theme, 'it was the telescope that, by piercing the obscurity which lies between us and distant worlds, put infidelity in possession of the argument against which we are now contending. But about the time of its invention another instrument was formed which laid open a scene no less wonderful, and rewarded the inquisitive spirit of man with a discovery which serves to neutralize the whole of this argument. This was the micro-

[1] H. R. Gamble, *The Ten Virgins*, 84.
[2] ii. 69ff.

scope. The one led me to see a system in every star; the other leads me to see a world in every atom. The one taught me that this mighty globe, with the whole burden of its people and of its countries, is but a grain of sand on the high field of immensity; the other teaches me that every grain of sand may harbour within it the tribes and the families of a busy population. The one told me of the insignificance of the world I tread upon; the other redeems it from all its significance, for it tells me that in the leaves of every forest, and in the flowers of every garden, and in the waters of every rivulet, there are worlds teeming with life, and numberless as are the glories of the firmament. The one has suggested to me, that beyond and above all that is visible to man, there may lie fields of creation which sweep immeasurably along, and carry the impress of the Almighty's hand to the remotest scenes of the universe; the other suggests to me, that within and beneath all that minuteness which the aided eye of man has been able to explore, there may lie a region of invisibles; and that, could we draw aside the mysterious curtain which shrouds it from our senses, we might there see a theatre of as many wonders as astronomy has unfolded, a universe within the compass of a point so small as to elude all the powers of the microscope, but where the wonder-working God finds room for the exercise of all His attributes, where He can raise another mechanism of worlds, and fill and animate them all with the evidences of His glory. They, therefore, who think that God will not put forth such a power and such a goodness and such a condescension in behalf of this world as are ascribed to Him in the New Testament, because he has so many other worlds to attend to, think of Him as a man. They confine their view to the informations of the telescope, and forget altogether the informations of the other instrument. They only find room in their minds for His one attribute of a large and general superintendence, and keep out of their remembrance the equally impressive proofs we have for His other attribute of a minute and multiplied attention to all that diversity of operations, where it is He that worketh all in all. And when I think, that as one of the instruments of philosophy has heightened our every impression of the first of these attributes, so another instrument has no less heightened our impression of the second of them—then I can no longer resist the conclusion that it would be a transgression of sound argument, as well as a daring of impiety, to draw a limit around the doings of this unsearchable God; and should a professed revelation from heaven tell me of an act of condescension, in behalf of some separate world, so wonderful that angels desired to look into it, and the eternal Son had to move from His seat of glory to carry it into accomplishment, all I ask is the evidence of such a revelation; for let it tell me as much as it may of God letting Himself down for the benefit of one single province of His dominions, this is no more than what I see lying scattered in numberless examples before me, and running through the whole line of my recollections, and meeting me in every walk of observation to which I can betake myself; and now that the microscope has unveiled the wonders of another region, I see strewed around me, with a profusion which baffles my every attempt to comprehend it, the evidence that there is no one portion of the universe of God too minute for His notice, nor too humble for the visitations of His care.'

'At the end of this passage,' one present upon the occasion has told us, 'there ran through the congregation a suppressed but perfectly audible murmur of applause—an occurrence unprecedented in the course of the delivery of a sermon, but irresistible, in order to relieve our highly excited feelings.'

What is Man.

Ps. viii. 4.—'What is man?'

THREE times this question is asked in Scripture—once in the presence of Nature, once in the presence of History, once in the presence of Life. Nature, history, life—these are the three sources of all knowledge; from them, either separately or together, all our theories are deduced, with them our practice is concerned. What we wish to discover is the

nature of our relationship to each of these, and the basis on which it rests. Our daily occupations depend on the assertion of man's power to bend the outward world to his own purposes. On the power of adjusting national and international relationships depend man's freedom and his opportunity for the development of his faculties. On his attitude towards his immediate surroundings depends the success or failure of the individual life. All these truths are not new, but very old. No problem besets us nowadays which has not always beset mankind. These problems were presented to thinking men in a remote period of the world's history. In each case the problem was solved by faith in God. The revelation of God's nature and relation to man taught those who grasped it to recognize their true dignity, and maintain themselves against the stress of outward circumstances and inward fear.

1. *Nature.*—There in the stillness of the night, when no cloud dimmed the lustre of an eastern sky, when the countless stars above looked down upon the Psalmist, when he alone was waking, and there was nothing that reminded him of man's activity, he felt himself in his entire solitude face to face with Nature, and was overawed by the sense of a terrible and remorseless power. The meteors shot across the heavens; he knew not whence they came or whither they went. Everything was a wonder and a bewilderment. There was no one to whom he could turn, no one to make answer, and his spirit sank within him. It was but for a moment, this feeling of helplessness. He was master of a spell whereby he could lay the terrible apparition. He was not alone, for God was with him; and in the sense of God's presence he recovered his power and freed himself from his bondage. The heaven was the work of God's fingers; by Him the sun and the moon were ordained; and he was nearer to God, after all, than they. His terror before the power of Nature gave way to wonder at God's purposes. 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?' Man so small, so feeble, so limited, when compared with the mighty forces at work outside him—why should he be chosen to such excellency?

There was no answer save the answer of faith. Against the appalling vastness of the revelation of Nature he could only set his confidence in the Divine revelation handed down by his forefathers. 'Have dominion,' said God to Adam. 'Into your hand they are delivered,' was the message to Noah. Those who believed these commissions were delivered from the thraldom of Nature, and received the consciousness of a spiritual being. He could not explain all this, but he felt it. 'Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.' So it was; and the man within him leapt up in recognition of the truth, and he was strong again. But as he felt his strength he recognized also its responsibility, and bowed his head before the Author of his great commisison. 'O Lord, our Governor, how excellent is thy Name in all the world.'

O fire of heaven! O sacred Light!
How fair and bright,
How great am I,
Whom all the world doth magnify!

O Heavenly Joy!
O great and sacred blessedness
Which I possess!
So great a joy
Who did into my arms convey?

From God above
Being sent, the Heavens me enflame:
To praise his Name
The stars do move!
The burning sun doth shew his love.

O how divine
Am I! To all this sacred wealth,
This life and health,
Who raised? Who mine
Did make the same? What hand divine?[1]

2. *History.*—But it is not only when man is alone with Nature that the sense of his littleness is borne in upon his mind. The

[1] T. Traherne.

question raised in the 8th Psalm is repeated in the 144th: 'Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him?' But the circumstances which prompted the question are widely different. We do not know when the latter Psalm was written, or what are the events to which it refers. Its general purport, however, is clear enough. It expresses the writer's exultation at some signal victory which crowned the arms of Israel. 'Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: . . . who subdueth my people under me.' The temper of mind is not that of subjection to an external power, not a feeling of helplessness. It is the consciousness of power, the flush of success, the glory of triumph. But in the very moment when the heart beats fastest with joy comes the haunting contrast: Israel conquered; the enemy fled. The host of Israel returns home triumphant; the foe lies dead upon the field. Whence came this great difference? What is the meaning of this sharp division? No one knew so well as the leader the narrow issues on which hung the fortune of the fight. For a moment the ranks wavered; for a moment his heart sank within him. There was an agonized cry, a desperate rally, a supreme effort, and all was well. The sudden recovery was the decisive act. The ebbing tide of human beings slowly turned, and presently swept away all the opponents into scattered fragments. How came it to be so? The foe also was fighting for hearth and home. For each of the warriors wife and children were anxiously waiting. Yet one side conquered, the other was routed. The victor recognized more clearly than did the vanquished the feebleness, the littleness of man. He could not account for his success; he knew that in another battle, under slightly altered circumstances, to-day's decision might be reversed. He knew the limits of his own forethought, the impossibility of security. He had conquered; how if he had been defeated? He shuddered at the thought. No wonder that he, too, cried out, 'What is man? Is he a puppet in the hand of fate? Is he the sport of circumstance? On what do his fortunes depend?'

Again these questionings were answered, not by man's unaided wisdom, but by an appeal to God's revelation made in the times of old. The Psalmist had heard with his ears, and his fathers had declared to him the story of God's call, whereby the people of Israel received the assurance of their national commission. He had conquered, not by any merits of his own, but because he was fulfilling God's command. His own individual life and the life of his people were alike part of the Divine purpose. He had conquered because God had work for him to do, because the national life of Israel contained elements of spiritual power which were bound to survive amid the clash and tumult of the world. 'It is God who giveth salvation unto Kings; who delivereth his servants from the hurtful sword.' And this help of God was the reward of faithful service. God aided His people that they might obey His laws.

3. *Life.*—A third time in the record of Old Testament Scripture does the question of the text occur, and again in new circumstances. Amid the overwhelming desolation which had unexpectedly fallen upon him, the patriarch Job utters the despairing cry, 'What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him . . . and that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?' In the greatness of his distress all outward helps had fallen from him, and he was driven back upon his inmost self. He sought there for the cause of his misfortunes, but could not find it. His friend could only utter commonplaces, and point to the old axiom that punishment followed upon sin. Job vainly asked him to lay his finger upon the spot, and show him wherein he had acted unjustly out of wilfulness. No, there was for him neither consolation nor explanation possible. Misery had come upon him, complete and crushing; disaster which it was beyond his power to avert. The fact was terribly obvious; the reason was past his power to discover. No wonder that he sent forth the despairing cry, 'What is man?' It was not the actual pressure of his misfortunes that weighed so heavily on Job as the sense of the complete overthrow of the principles

on which his life had been built. He thought his feet were set upon a rock, and lo, his footing had entirely slipped. The God whom he had tried to serve had deserted him, and he was oppressed by the awfulness of the solitude in which he found himself. 'What is man?' he cried. And the riddle seemed to him only the more insoluble because he had before found its solution in the presence of God. Were all the affections which he had cherished, all the inspirations which he had welcomed, all the integrity of heart which he had cultivated —were all these things useless? Amid the wreckage of his life he was tempted to resent the fact that he had ever known God or learned the joy of communion with Him. It were almost better had he lived without the knowledge of One whose yoke was intolerable.

Yet he felt that could not be; he could not forgo the soul's life that still pulsed within him, the being that had been created in that belief in God. 'How long wilt thou not depart from me?' We know that an answer came at length to Job's questionings—an answer that raised him in the scale of spiritual being. He learned so much by his experience, painful as it was, that all his past knowledge was as nothing in comparison. 'I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' [1]

I cannot understand
The strange, sad mystery to-day,
Here in the shadowland,
Where knowledge only leads astray.

I also sometime trod
This path where hidden danger lies,
And sought to find out God
Where heights of human wisdom rise.

But now I only see,
Though all around is cold and dim,
One Light that shines on me,
And as I look away to Him—

Lo! in the Light divine—
Wherever falls Its living ray—
I see that all things shine
Undimmed, and night is changed for day.[2]

[1] M. Creighton.
[2] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Songs*, 94.

Three Thoughts.

Ps. viii. 4—'What is man?'

To that question many answers of a conflicting nature have been given, and are being given, in the world of thought and action. Suppose we put the question to some medical student, it is possible he may answer thus: 'Man is a highly-developed vertebrate, a more or less clever and successful ape, who has worsted his competitors in the struggle for existence, and stands as conqueror at the head of things.' We may put the question to the pessimistic philosopher, whose pity for humanity lacks nothing of our own, but whose confidence in the destiny of humanity is the accompaniment of his answer to this question, What is man? Listen to him. 'Man is a vapour, a breath that passeth away; man is as a bubble upon the wave of causation, here to-day, gone to-morrow, gone for ever. Man is but one of Nature's many experiments, and is to make way by-and-by for another and perhaps a greater. Man has no destiny beyond that which he pictures to himself in his own fancy. In the words of that immortal pessimist, Omar Khayyam:

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.

We may put the question to the busy City man. The answer may be, 'I do not know; it takes me all my time to live; my horizon is narrow and contracted, and when I think, I get no nearer to the solution of the great mystery.

Art is Long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.'

Now over against those answers set the words of the Psalmist, and with these ringing in our ears let us address ourselves anew to the statement of our position in the great order of the universe.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?
For thou hast made him but little lower than God,
And crownest him with glory and honour.

1. The first answer to the question of the text suggested by this old-world singer is that man is a product of the Divine Thought and Love and Power. We are told this in so many words in this delightful little poem—'Thou hast made him'—'Thou art mindful of him'—'Thou visitest him.' One of our popular writers has given us a highly imaginative picture of God as immanent in His vast universe, and has called Him 'The Lonely God,' whose greatest consciousness was a need for companionship. Out of that loneliness and need there came the thought of a creature akin to Himself in mind and faculty, with whom He might hold communion. That was the thought of God, and in its realization His love and power co-operated, and man came into being. There is nothing that gives such dignity to humanity as this, that every man is just a thought of God, a product of His love and power.

No wonder the thought has inspired our sweetest singers, as it did George MacDonald, whose poem, 'Baby,' is said to be 'the sweetest lullaby in our language.' After the opening stanza:—

Where did you come from, baby dear?
Out of the everywhere into here,

there is a poet's playful fancy about baby's eyes, and ears, and hands, and feet, and smiles, and then he ends with:—

How did they all just come to be you?
God thought about me and so I grew.

But how did you come to us, you dear?
God thought about you, and so I am here.

If we but appreciated the real significance of the fact that we are God-made—products of His thought and love—how it would elevate our conception of manhood, how it would dignify our human life, and how it would deliver us from every mean motive, from every unworthy thought, from every ungodlike act.

2. We learn, too, from this old-world poet that man is a denizen of a wondrous sphere. This singer sees man set here in the centre of this great world-order and in the current of its movement, yoked to high tasks and noble endeavour, and destined to exercise authority, dominion and power over all things around him—authority over bird and beast, dominion and power over earth and sea and air. All which things are set out in pictorially poetic speech in these strangely beautiful and melodious verses; and they all centre in the truth that God who has made us has set us here to live our mortal life in this wonderful world. With what glory, then, is our human life invested! One sings of it as—

A speck in time's great wilderness,
A narrow isthmus 'twixt two boundless seas;
The past, the present, two eternities.

Truly, it is a wondrous sphere—this little speck of life, this 'narrow isthmus.' It is big enough and broad enough for vast issues to hang upon it, for splendid opportunities to centre in it, for boundless and immeasurable eternities to meet in it. In it good and evil are engaged in deadly conflict for our souls. It is crowded with privilege and discipline, and it is decisive of destiny for the most of us. Indeed, its chief interest for us all would seem to be that it rings round our probation. In view of all this it ill becomes us to regard either ourselves or our sphere lightly. For it is no mean thing to be alive—a man, of such power and potency in this terrestrial sphere. Let it not be thought of lightly and spoken of flippantly or irreverently. Our presence and responsibility in such a sphere forbid frivolity, for in it struggle and mystery and tragedy are strangely blended—struggle in which the weak do not always go to the wall,

or the fittest invariably survive; mystery, the elucidation of which allures, but almost as oft eludes us; tragedy, which is the result of mistaken plans, foiled purposes, baffled hopes and disastrous miscarriages. Yet in this sphere of which we are denizens there is no little splendour, magnificence and glory. It is this that prompts Browning to declare that it is 'just the stuff to try the soul's strength upon,' and then to exclaim with a thrill:—

Let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers,
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears.

This, then, is what man is—a denizen of a splendid sphere and, at the same time, that sphere's motive and glory. For the earth and the world are what they are for man's sake. For him the sun shines and the stars appear; for him the birds sing, the brooks babble and the zephyrs blow; for him the seasons come and the earth yields her abundance, her beauty and her fragrance.

How great is little man!
Sun, moon, and stars respond to him,
Shine or grow dim
Harmonious with his span.

How great is little man!
More changeable than changeful moon,
Nor half in tune
With Heaven's harmonious plan.

. . . . . .

Thou heir of all things, man,
Pursue the saints by heavenward track:
They looked not back;
Run thou, as erst they ran.

Little and great is man:
Great if he will, or if he will
A pigmy still;
For what he will he can.[1]

3. Yet one thing remains to be said of man, and it is this: he is an amazing amalgam of apparently incompatible opposites—dust and divinity, animal and angel. Who that knows anything of his own heart, not necessarily through the study of psychology, but in the light of his own inner experience of spiritual struggle, can deny it? His aspirations and tendencies, his hopes and limitations, his purposes and habits, his struggles, temptations and defeats make it impossible for him to doubt the presence of these opposites in himself, and that, as Hamlet puts it, there are 'centred in our make such strange extremes.' Our inner consciousness corroborates the witness of the Bible to the combination or, at any rate, the juxtaposition within us of the animal and the angel, of dust and divinity, of the earthly and the heavenly. Professor J. Arthur Thomson, in one of his books, says truly: 'Man at his best discovers the secret motions of things and uses his knowledge to bend Nature to his purposes. He seeks after the true, the beautiful, and the good. He sends his tendrils to the stars.'

What does this high doctrine of man involve? Surely, it involves us in the obligation to gird ourselves to the great task of suppressing the animal in ourselves and encouraging the angel, of conquering the dust and fostering the divinity. To quote Professor Thomson again: 'Man often seems like a creature whose wings have been smirched with oil or bedraggled with mud, so that it cannot fly. . . . There are gratuitous handicaps which can be got rid of, so as to leave the developing human spirit to go forth with a new freedom on its quest after adventures in the Kingdom of the Spirit.'

Let us endeavour to become in actuality what we are in the thought of God, not only 'but little lower' than Himself, but ever aspiring, striving, growing towards completer likeness to Him.

Let each man think himself an act of God,
His mind a thought, his life a breath of God;
And let each try, by great thoughts and good deeds,
To show the most of Heaven he hath in him.[1]

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

[1] A. Wilkes.

The Glory of Man.

Ps. viii. 4.—'What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?'

The text has a twofold aspect. The Psalmist reflects upon the insignificance of man, and he marvels also at the Divine goodness. What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Here is the great wonder, that the mighty Maker of all things should fix His tenderest love and care upon the feeble inhabitants of this little planet; that He visits them among the vast concerns of the universe, and draws them towards Him. This is what we can never understand, but what we must always remember and rejoice in.

1. It is something to remember that God is ever drawing us near to Him in the spiritual world. Think what this life of ours would be if this spiritual element were lacking; if we never felt the thrill of virtuous resolve; if we never heard the vast spirit within calling us to struggle upward; if we never caught a glimpse of the Divine excellence shining far above us and drawing us to itself. All the true glory of human existence lies in the fact that the heart does respond to them. Love and the effort to do something noble in life are the jewels of humanity. The history of mankind derives its significance and worth from the fact that God is moving in it, training, developing, and redeeming the race. Life draws all its meaning and value from the truth that God is mindful of us, and visits us from day to day. If life were merely eating and drinking it might be otherwise, but the great Spirit that is our Father feeds our deepest needs, educates our noblest traits, disciplines our follies, thus fitting us for His imperishable glories that are to come. That is man. Then how glorious and excellent a thing is it to be alive!

What art thou, that comest thus
In thy beauty seeking us,
Still besetting young and old
With the vision manifold?

Happy childhood smiles to see
All that brings a smile from thee;
Lord, forbid that years of use
Blind us to a grace profuse.

Oh that, wise at last, we saw
Thee in Nature's constant law,
Strong and true, and glad to bless,
Thee, in all thy loveliness!

Then our lives, so prone to wear
Stains of sorrow and of care,
Faithless sorrow, care unblest,
In thy beauty would be drest.

What is man, that he should be
Visited, O Lord, by thee?
Come, O come, till thou impart
All we are, and all thou art.[1]

2. And once more it is something for us to remember that God has visited man in the flesh; that He has come to this earth and dwelt here with us as a Friend, a Brother, and a Saviour. Verily and in truth Bethlehem Ephratah was blessed among the cities of Judah, because the Prince of Israel was born there; and though it were least among the cities, His splendour and glory make it shine beyond all the stars, because it is the scene of the incarnation of the Love and of the Son of God. Nowhere else in the universe is there a life like ours; or if there be anywhere among those shining wondrous orbs of heaven, of worlds on worlds, a life like ours, then on that orb too we believe that God has come, and that the Divine love has been incarnated; but so far as we know from the men who search and study the heavens, in all this wide star-sown field, this earth is the only place that is fitted for the development of what we understand by life; and if that be so, that is the reason why among all the majestic suns this little planet was chosen for the scene of the birth of the Love and of the Son of God; because here was man, of whom God is mindful, and whom God visited. That wondrous glory drew near to us as a Friend, a Brother, and a Saviour, One in whom the Divine glory was manifested in perfect character and

[1] W. G. Tarrant, *Songs Devout*, 51.

heroic life, and in a singular death-destroying resurrection. In this flesh which crumbles, in a life so brief, here, in this very flesh, purity and love and self-sacrifice, and all those highest and most desirable virtues were perfected in the life of the Son of God, and the Son of man. 'For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham; wherefore in all things it behove him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.'

With this ambiguous earth
His dealings have been told us. These abide:
The signal to a maid, the human birth,
The lesson, and the young Man crucified.

But not a star of all
The innumerable host of stars has heard
How He administered this terrestrial ball.
Our race have kept their Lord's entrusted Word.

Of His earth-visiting feet
None knows the secret, cherished, perilous,
The terrible, shamefast, frightened, whispered, sweet,
Heart-shattering secret of His way with us.

No planet knows that this
Our wayside planet, carrying land and wave,
Love and life multiplied, and pain and bliss,
Bears, as chief treasure, one forsaken grave.

Nor, in our little day,
May His devices with the heavens be guessed,
His pilgrimage to thread the Milky Way
Or His bestowals there be manifest.

But in the eternities,
Doubtless we shall compare together, hear
A million alien Gospels, in what guise
He trod the Pleiades, the Lyre, the Bear.

O, be prepared, my soul!
To read the inconceivable, to scan
The million forms of God those stars unroll
When, in our turn, we show to them a Man.[1]

[1] Alice Meynell, *Poems*, 114.

3. Now we begin to feel the answer to the question of the text, What is man? Man is God's child. God has set His heart upon him and visited him every day. In the house of the rich man there are many treasures; rare books, costly pictures, splendid marbles, shining gems; but the little child that bears his image and likeness, and that looks up into his face with smiling love, and that answers to his affections with tender heart, is the dearest jewel of them all. And there is no man or woman who would not see the great house blotted out by fire, and every treasure absolutely destroyed rather than that harm should come to one hair of that little golden head. In the great house of God there are many treasures and jewels: stars and planets, suns and moons; but above them all God values His human child. More than all, He cares for us, because He has made us in His likeness, and He daily woos us to love and serve and worship Him.

There is an old hymn which says, 'I want to be an angel.' That is a second-class wish. There is something far better than to be an angel. It is far better to be a child that has wandered from God in sin, and to be among those whom He has loved, whom He has redeemed, and called back to Himself; whom He has taken into His own fellowship, and whom, at last, purified and ransomed, He will take to dwell with Him for ever.

Self-Reverence.

Ps. viii. 5.—'Thou hast made him but little lower than God' (RV).

THE Psalmist looks back upon man's creation. He was made to be but little lower than God, or to lack but little of being God. The reference is, no doubt, to what is termed in Gen. i. man's creation in the image of God, by which is meant his possession of self-conscious reason—an adumbration, we may suppose, however faint, of the supreme mind of God. This faculty separates man from the brute creation, enables him to know in a sense in which the animals do not know, to act with delibe-

rate forethought and adaptation of means to ends, to originate—a power which may be said to correspond in some measure, though of course in an infinitely lower degree, with the creative will of God. In virtue of this faculty he is capable of articulate speech, which is the expression of the rational mind; he has the capacity of distinguishing not only, as the animals do, pleasure and pain, but also right and wrong; and he has the power, to a certain degree, of apprehending God, and of holding communion with Him. These faculties of knowledge, thought, speech, discovery, origination, invention, this power of apprehending religious and moral truth, these intellectual and spiritual endowments, which raise man above sense and time and merely material considerations, which elevate him above the brutes and ally him with God, and which are all dependent on, and are, in fact, parts of, the one supreme and princely gift of self-conscious reason, are what is meant when it is said that man is created 'in the image of God'; and they are what are alluded to here when the Psalmist describes him as made 'but a little lower than God.'

Being made in the image of God, we may take it for granted that it is our duty to make the best of ourselves. This does not, of course, mean that vulgar, despicable conception of taking care of ourselves that finds expression in that low aphorism, 'Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.' For, according to the teaching of the Master, a man makes the best of himself when he gives himself in sacrificial and redemptive—that is to say, Christ-like—labours for his brethren, and

All through life I see a cross
  Where sons of God yield up their breath;
There is no gain except by loss,
  There is no life except by death.

1. Each one of us has received from God the splendid endowment of a human personality, the best gift and the most perfect boon that the Father of Lights has entrusted to us. Now all God's gifts are trusts, to be used and ordered in the spirit of a sane and enlightened stewardship. And if this is true of wealth, our culture, and all that is summed up in the word 'talents,' how much more true is it of that 'spark of the Eternal God' which is God in us! How, then, shall this Divine spark be best fanned into bright and loving flame? How shall we 'guard the deposit that has been committed to our charge,' so that ever increasingly

Our hearts in glad surprise
  May to higher levels rise.

All other questions sink into nothingness before this—wealth, fame, position, popularity.

The answer is: Hang about your necks the jewelled amulet of self-reverence, think highly of yourself, remember the dignity of your self-hood. And as a ground and reason for this self-reverence, consider the august forces that have conspired to put you in possession of a self-contained life, since

The quickening spirit breathed on the sea's dead face,
And the faint life stirred that should one day blossom in man.

The theory of evolution has sometimes been held to detract from man's dignity, and men have thought it derogatory to believe that there is any organic and constitutional connection between themselves and the lower animals. But surely it adds immensely to the proper conception of our dignity when we come to see that all the great cosmic processes, all the long and upward march of life, has been ordered by God with a view to our self-hood. Through æon after æon the Divine purpose has been working itself out, and all with a view to man. We are told in the old story, the essential inspiration of which all science is now confirming, that man was placed at the head of all creation in the first dim days of human history; and now science tells us that this is so, that the drama of creation is closed, having led up to ourselves, and that 'on the earth there will never be a higher creature than man.' Man was always told that his place was high, the reason for it he never knew till now; he never knew

that his little deeds were the very laws of Nature, that he alone was the Alpha and Omega of creation, the beginning and the end of matter, the final goal of life. Yes, we can use the words of the Psalmist, putting into them a deeper reverence even than that which they could have had for him, 'I will give thanks unto thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well; Thou hast made him a little lower than God; Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour; Thou hast put all things under his feet.'

2. Consider also that magnificent fund of spiritual forces that enters into the lives of us who are 'the heirs of all the ages in the foremost ranks of time'—spiritual forces that have been generated by the lives, words, and influences of saint and martyr, poet and seer, reformer and artist. Is it nothing that we are owners of 'Plato's brain, of Lord Christ's heart, and Shakespeare's strain,' that we enter into accumulated experiences, the outcome of the mystic's vision, and the poet's dream, and the saint's life, and the prophet's message, and the martyr's blood; that these have at once helped to put us into possession of our present personalities and at the same time taught us how to use them? And think again of the ground for self-reverence that is afforded us by the fact that Jesus Christ has lived this life of ours, has possessed this selfhood that we enjoy. Surely the brightest light that ever flamed upon manhood to show its dignity and worthiness is the light that springs from the stupendous fact of a God in man, tabernacling in man, not disdaining to be clothed upon with a human personality. Look, too, at the ground for self-reverence that is afforded by the very needs of our nature, our souls, our selves, our personalities. Man's greatness in the light of his needs, how paradoxical it sounds! And yet no one can have pondered that thought of St. Augustine's, 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee,' without perceiving how splendid a vindication it is of the greatness to which our God has called us. False and full of sin though we be, and blurred and defaced by actual or aboriginal calamity, the Divine image may be within us. There is a soul-hunger which only the Infinite is able to satisfy. The lower creation would seem to find in its natural environment full satisfaction for its desires, but there is that within each one of us which overleaps even the nearest and dearest social relationships, craving for a love so large, and a kindness so boundless, and a communion so perfect that only God Himself can meet our needs. Nature, art, and poetry, the love of parent and of friend, do but serve to whet our appetite for Him who stands above Nature as its King, and above Fatherhood and Motherhood as their Divine archetype:—

There's heaven above, and night by night
I look right through its gorgeous roof,
No suns and moons though e'er so bright
Avail to stop one; splendour, proof,
I keep the broods of stars aloof,
For I intend to get to God,
For 'tis to God I speed so fast,
For in God's breast, my own abode,
Those shoals of dazzling glory passed,
I lay my spirit down at last.[1]

Pride.

Ps. x. 2.—'The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor.'

Some of us in reading the Bible, and especially the Psalms, must have been struck with the way in which they speak of the proud. We hear so much of them. They are all round the Psalmist. They are the people who make the world so hard to him; they are the cause of so much mischief in the world. They are his enemies, and the enemies of God. The dislike of pride is one of the ruling thoughts of the Bible. This is surprising to us. Pride is not in our eyes one of the worst evils. We talk of drunkenness, sensuality, cowardice, cruelty as giant evils, but not of pride. We often speak favourably of it as independence, push, self-respect, strength of mind, proper pride, and the like.

[1] G. H. R. Garcia.

1. The men of the Bible find themselves surrounded by the proud. The proud prevail; they have the world with them. They give, as we should say, the tone to society. Let us look at them more closely. Doing so we notice three things.

(1) *They are marked by unmindfulness of God.* That is so like the Bible; it begins with God, not with men, and judges things as it were from that side. 'The ungodly is so proud that he careth not for God, neither is God in all his thoughts. Tush, say they, how should God perceive it? Is there knowledge in the Most High? They say, Tush, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. They do not take God for their strength. They have not set thee before their eyes.'

(2) And then, because of this, *they are filled with an overweening confidence in themselves.* It comes out even in their bearing. They have a proud look, 'a pride of his countenance.' They boast of it in their speech; their word is law; 'their tongue speaketh great things. We are they that ought to speak; our lips are our own.' They are sure of themselves. 'He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved, for I shall never be in adversity'; and fortune seems to favour them; they triumph; they 'prosper in the world: they have riches in possession:' therefore they are popular, 'the people fall unto them.'

(3) And so, again, thus secure of themselves, reckless of God, *they are under no restraint.* Utterly selfish, they pursue their own interests. 'Their heart is as fat as grease.' There is no chance of appealing to them or making an impression on them. They make a public opinion of their own. 'The ungodly hath made boast of his own heart's desire and speaketh good of the covetous.' They have in derision those who do not go with them, those who are more scrupulous or more God-fearing than themselves. They tread on others without scruple. They are cruel. The proud are tyrants. They 'ravish the poor.' Against them the poor and fatherless cry out, and cry often in vain. They are men of the world; they 'have their portion in this life!' God, says the Psalmist with bold irony, 'fills their bellies with his hid treasure.' They take their own way, and are even admired for it. 'So long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee.'

2. What are we to say of all this as regards ourselves? Is it all out of date? If so, this part of the Bible is hardly of value for us. Or is it a true, clear-sighted view of human life and character? Of course, the outside of things is rather different now. Civilization has done so much. Open tyranny and plunder are not frequent. Manners lead us to abstain from insolent boasting. But the Psalmist was not wrong in his judgment of this temper. We have to thank him for dragging to light one of the greatest, deadliest enemies of real excellence and real beauty in human character. There are reasons which force us to admit that he was right.

(1) The first is that *a proud heart shuts the door against improvement,* against progress. The proud man is unteachable. 'Thy judgments are far above out of his sight.' He doesn't want to learn; he is content with himself. He doesn't own to a fault. Think what this would mean in a child. We could never train it; and a true man's life should be a continual training, a constant learning. Did not the Master tell us that the little child is our model? Humanity which is on the lookout to learn, which is not ashamed to own failure and fault, which accepts rebuke, will, in the long run, be more than a match for unteachable pride. 'Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser.' Humility is wisdom.

¶ The reason why pride is so deadly is because it makes one incapable of learning or of perceiving one's failures and shortcomings. One translates a failure of one's own into the stupidity or the perverseness of other people, and instead of taking a misfortune or a calamity as showing one frankly and plainly that one has been stupid or lazy or careless, one takes it with a kind of patient solemnity, as intended to minister to one's own sense of ineffable importance. One thinks of it as the

dent of the graver upon the gem, when it is often no more than the throwing of the cracked potsherd upon the rubbish heap.[1]

(2) Pride, then, is against the growth and progress of life; *it is* as much *against the truth and wholesomeness of life.* It sees things wrong; it gives men an utterly deceptive idea of their life; it is blindly short-sighted. Think of the being in whom it dwells—a creature of dust, with the breath of a few years in him; open to every accident and every disease; liable at any moment to some stroke of sickness or ill-fortune which may shatter his happiness and turn his outward prosperity into a mockery. Such a one it is whom pride deceives into saying, 'I shall never be moved.' This is what we can see with our eyes, and the experience of every day reminds us of it. But looking at the matter as the Psalmist did, there is a worse folly and a blinder short-sightedness. It is that of the thing made exalting itself against its Maker; of the creature making no account of Him in whose Hands is its breath. It is that of those who will come to judgment living as though they would never have to give account.

¶ When was sin more glaring than at present, unless indeed the Ten Commandments have been wiped off God's statute book, and ministers of the Gospel agree with that most considerate French lady—'depend upon it, Sir, God will think twice before damning people of such quality.[2]

¶ To-day he [the Archbishop of York] told us how Principal Marshall Lang at Skibo Castle rebuked Andrew Carnegie. Andrew, in the blatant way in which he sometimes talks, had demanded from the Principal what good things God could give him which he had not got already. 'Well, for instance, replied the Principal, 'there is *the grace of humility*!'[3]

(3) But there is yet a third charge against pride, against this easy, self-confident, self-willed spirit—*it is cruel.* Is it as cruel as it was in the Psalmist's day? If we look at the substance of the thing, we shall still find it cruel under a respectable dress. It is cruel in homes where sons are wasteful and swaggering, where they submit to no rules, think of no one's convenience, and spend, just as fashion or fancy bids, money which others stint themselves to provide. It is cruel where fathers and husbands are cold-hearted, domineering, absorbed in their own success or business, with no sympathy for others. It is cruel, too, in society, where luxury is often a heartless slave-driver; in commercial and industrial life, where the weak are crushed without mercy, and a little advantage in business and competition excuses sharp practice and unblushing selfishness. It is cruel when it sacrifices women to men's lusts and pleasures, and is not ashamed to justify the coarsest of all cruelties as natural and necessary.

¶ Luxury leads to cruelty in our industrial relations. When among rich and poor no good sense seems comparable to the good which money can procure, profits are put before health, gambling before work and force before right; child labour is used, conditions of trade and housing which cripple strength are permitted, and wars, industrial as well as foreign, are justified; landlords take their rent, and holders of shares in companies take their dividends and forget the earners' sufferings. Human beings injured and weakened are thrown on the scrap-heap, they become unemployed and unemployable, and poverty follows.

The dominant ideals make or unmake a nation, and luxury exalts an ideal which seems to us to be anti-social.[1]

[1] A. C. Benson, *Along the Road*, 319.
[2] John Harland, *Only the Minister*, 111.
[3] *Lord Guthrie*, 233.

Covetousness.

Ps. x. 3.—'The covetous renounceth the Lord' (RV).

This is strong language to use of any sin. At first one is surprised that of this particular sin such language should be used. Covetousness seems a trivial fault. It is not a heresy; it is not a blasphemy; it is not a positive hurt to others; it is simply a disease of the

[1] *Canon Barnett*, ii. 258.

individual soul. Yet there is no other sin to which the Old Testament attaches such a stigma: 'The covetous renounceth the Lord.'

Observe, it is not said, 'The Lord renounceth the covetous'; the renunciation is on the human side—on the side of the covetous man himself. A greater stigma could not be attached to any sin. Many a heretic longs for God; many an agnostic thirsts for God; many a blasphemer speaks in an hour of madness what is not the voice of his sober mind. But to renounce God, to calmly refuse His advances, to repudiate His fellowship, to shut the door deliberately against Him—this is the acme of antagonism.

Why has covetousness incurred this deadly imputation? It is because the spirit of covetousness is the extreme opposite of the Spirit of God. It is more extreme than atheism. Atheism only fails to see a Divine Being; covetousness sees Him quite well and admires not His beauty. That which the covetous man admires is God's opposite. God is love, and the essence of love is giving; covetousness is self, and the essence of self is retaining. God is the converse of avarice. God dispenses charity; avarice gathers gold. God lavishes His treasures; avarice hoards its gains. God lives not to Himself; avarice has no life for another. God seeks out the destitute; avarice hides from meeting the poor. God has many mansions; avarice locks itself in a single room. God scatters sunbeams; avarice picks up pins. God sheds His blood to give life for the needy; avarice sheds the blood of the needy to give life to itself. We need not wonder that a Bible poet once selected as the extreme reverse of godliness, not atheism, but avarice: 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies and not to covetousness.'

¶ Avarice substitutes for God an even more amazing deity, something outside of ourselves, earthly and material. We think with disdain of the folly of the heathen, who bend the knee to graven images; but many a man's money is his god, and the coins of silver and of gold which he fingers so caressingly are in reality images in which his deity is embodied. This may seem a figure of rhetoric, but it is the sober truth. For, what is it to have a god? It is to have an object to which the heart turns with supreme affection and to which the mind looks as a refuge and defence in all the changes and chances of time. Are there not, however, those who feel the money they possess to be a far safer assurance against possible calamity than faith or prayer, and who would feel the loss of the opportunities of worshipping God afforded by the Sabbath and the sanctuary a far less sensible calamity than the loss of their money?

This unconscious idolatry sits deep in many hearts in the form of what our Lord called 'carefulness'—that is, the continual indulgence of carking care, a lifelong dread of poverty, a sense that, not having money, they have no protection and no hope. For avarice is not confined to those who are wealthy: the poor may be equally the victims of it. Excessive elation in the possession of money and excessive depression on account of the absence of it are, in fact, at the bottom the same feeling; and the feeling is, that money is the true divinity, beside which there is no other.[1]

¶ The love of money is always at first, often never more than, the love of meat and drink and dress, of the pleasures of the table, of luxurious living, of power, of applause, of books, of art—of that, in short, which meets some natural desire or propensity. But, as we all know, money may become, and often does become, more than this. Intercepting the feelings of which it has been the medium, it begins to be loved, not as a means, but as an end. The heart learns more and more to rest in it, all ulterior objects forgotten. All the scattered rays of desire, to which it was for a while transparent, become concentrated on it. All the streams of passion, the inclination, wishes, hopes, delights, now flow into this channel, and lend their combined force to the intensity of this one passion.[2]

¶ Scott in his Journal tells a story of the ruling passion strong in death. A Master in Chancery was on his deathbed—a very wealthy man. Some occasion of great urgency occurred in which it was necessary to make an affidavit, and the attorney, missing one or

[1] J. Stalker, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, 24.
[2] J. Caird, *Essays for Sunday Reading*, 31.

two other Masters, whom he inquired after, ventured to ask if Mr. —— would be able to receive the deposition. The proposal seemed to give him momentary strength; his clerk sent for, and the oath taken in due form, the Master was lifted up in bed, and with difficulty subscribed the paper; as he sank down again he made a signal to his clerk—'Wallace.' 'Sir?' 'Your ear—lower—lower. Have you got the *half-crown?*' He was dead before morning.[1]

Godlessness.

Ps. x. 4.—'God is not in all his thoughts.'

Shallowness is the prevailing evil of the day. The cares and pleasures of this life are so absorbing that men have no time for God or themselves. Therefore many live without ever discovering themselves. Life has been for them a succession of surface emotions; they have never faced the ultimate problems of which great souls are always aware. Little social ambitions, dress, company, gossip, eating and drinking, amusement, fill up all the spaces of consciousness; there is no quiet life of the spirit and no questionings of the deeper intuitions of the soul.

1. *The Cause.*—In endeavouring to define the cause we must remember at least three things.

(1) First, man is a progressive being, and in his early stages—whether ethnical or individual—is very animal. Most children are naturally rather greedy and selfish, and need education to lift them above these unamiable traits. The fineness of unselfishness and self-sacrifice needs time for development and appreciation. We must be patient with undeveloped people and let life educate them.

¶ Many people listen, perhaps allured but still unconvinced, to the presentation of high ideals of spiritual quality and life, and the reason is the caveman. Young people in particular often visualize their moral problem in some such way as this: on the one side is the ideal life with its purity, its self-forgetfulness, its fine awareness of things invisible, and on the other side are the primitive instincts—pugnacity, egotism, sensuality, the caveman within, and between these two there is an irreconcilable hostility. Thus morally split and bifurcated, with the ancient savage frowning on the potential saint, folk try to live, supposing that such is man's inevitable estate.[1]

(2) Secondly, we must learn that evil is very real and does blind people to truth and light. There are some who 'love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.' There is (as every spiritual person knows) a very solid and terrible power of darkness which obscures and hampers and thwarts all efforts to reach the light. Perversity, self-will, obstinacy in evil, persecution of goodness by sneer or force—all these are very real and keep men and women from thinking or reflecting, and so quench the promptings of natural religion which otherwise might guide them to higher truth.

¶ Man is an animal that must become an angel; he is matter in process of transformation into spirit. When the animal prevails he sinks lower than the beasts, for he places what remains of his intellect at the service of bestiality. If the angel prevail, man becomes his equal and, instead of being only a simple soldier of the Lord, has his share in what is Divine. But the fallen angel, condemned to assume the shape of an animal, is the persistent and determined enemy of all who tend to soar to those heights whence he himself has been cast down.[2]

(3) And, thirdly, we must acknowledge with open penitence that the teachers of the Church have often represented Christianity to men in such a poor and unromantic way that it has failed to enlist their zeal and enthusiasm. Christianity has been misrepresented as a kind of making up, what children call 'sucking up,' to God in order to save the soul from hell. Or it is an effort to develop and increase one's own goodness, and so secure one's salvation. Or it is a call to leave the world to stew in its own juice while one retires

[1] *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, 216.

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 143.
[2] Giovanni Papini, *The Story of Christ*, 46.

into some quiet corner to bask in the sweet joys of the love and service of God. But all this is simply selfish. It is a religious selfishness, but no better on that account. Holiness which stops at self is of no worth: God does not want holy people who fawn upon Him while He pets them. He wants holy people to serve Him by building His Kingdom and by uplifting a world to the end and vocation for which He has destined it. He wants lovers and workers, not paralytic pietists.

¶ The misery of the Monk is scarcely less pitiful. In his concern for *his own soul* he turns his back upon *the whole world*. Luther did. 'I was indeed a pious monk,' he writes to Duke George of Saxony, 'and followed the rules of my order more strictly than I can express. If ever monk could obtain heaven by his monkish works, I should certainly have been entitled to it. Of this all the friars who have known me can testify. If it had continued much longer, I should have carried my mortification even to death, by means of my vigils, prayers, readings and other cloistral labours.' Happily, Luther remembers the world—the whole world—the world that God so loved—the world for which Christ died. And, remembering *the whole world*, he set out from his convent cell to win it; and he won it in a way that made his *soul* more than ever *his own*.[1]

2. *The Cure.*—How is it possible to interest men in God to their own welfare and salvation? Again there are three ways.

(1) First, we must endeavour to make men think. In church, at the street corner, through books, we must reiterate the unchanging eternal questions: 'Whence do I come; whither am I going; what is my business here?' Where is the audience, in church or at some crowded street corner, that does not hush into attention when these questionings are considered. For from these questions can be suggested the only answer that really touches the soul of man: 'We came from God; we go to God; our business is to do our Father's will.'

Of course it is a thousand times right that we should love Him who is infinitely lovable, but love is not mere absorption in devotion; the lover must leave his Object to go and labour among the human hearts and lives for whom the Saviour died. And it is not even true to say that we will work for men for the love of God only. That is one motive and the highest; yet unless we come to love men for their own sake too—for their pathos, their helplessness, their sorrows and failures, their efforts and good qualities, their possession of a spark of the Divine—we shall treat them only as 'cases' instead of as individualities with something to love in each. What we have not taught sufficiently is that because God loves man, and because man is meant to be immortal and holy, and because we love both God and man, therefore we must strip ourselves for the effort to raise man—for God's sake and his own—to the nobility and sublimity to which God has predestined him.

(2) Secondly, our task is to remove from the minds of the people the false notions of religion which have taken so deep a root, and to teach the true religion in their stead. They do firmly believe, some of them, that religion is the rejection of all that is happy and pleasurable, others that it is simply a selfish desire to save one's soul from hell by a more or less unmanly subservience to God. Even among church-goers religion has been a mere piety or a personal search for salvation; how can you inspire men and women by a creed like that? Real men and women can be inspired only by something for which it is worth fighting and suffering.

(3) And the third thing we need is a great increase in the volume of prayer—the surrender of the will to God, the putting ourselves at His service, the asking for a blessing on mankind. We want a sufficiency of praying persons, so that the Spirit and all the angelic hosts can act upon the world through us. We deprive the world of the Spirit because we deny ourselves to be used by God. We are the appointed conduits of the Spirit, but we let ourselves be choked by sin and materialism, so that He cannot use us as means to help the world.

[1] F. W. Boreham, *A Casket of Cameos*, 208.

I had no time in all my work and play
To say a word to God, so yesterday,
When my last toy was broken, and my hand
Failed from the work the strenuous brain had planned,
And God I sought with pitiful cry, heart-sore,
Lo, briars choked the way, and hid the door!

So now I am resolved that everything,
In work or play, shall grow a prayer-wing,
And I will carve from every grievous load
Great blocks of prayer to pave me Heaven's road,
And every task a finger-post shall be,
To point a surer way, dear Lord, to Thee.[1]

Godless Thoughts.

Ps. x. 4.—'God is not in all his thoughts.'

Let us take the text as it stands in the Authorized Version, because there are manifold differences of opinion as to the exact translation of the verse, and because as it stands it contains a truth which would not be any less a truth even if it were expressed in a mistranslation. 'God is not in all his thoughts.' We have here the description of a type of man, not necessarily wicked according to any standard of gross and open vice, but vicious only from the absence of virtue. All that is said of him is that there is a great and damning lack in him. There is something wanting; and though he may be a man of many superior powers and qualities, that something lacking will stamp him. So this Psalmist judged character. The men to whom he referred were not thoughtless by any means; it could not be made an accusation against them that they did not use their intellects. They had their thoughts, but God was not in them; and what impression that gives us of some soul starving in the midst of plenty, and shivering with fever in a torrid land, we all know only too well.

¶ A young man in London said of his companions 'they never gave God a thought.' Everything is in that phrase. Many men sin and fall and rise again; many virtuous men throughout their lives are caught away from the best by the temptation of the second-rate or the worst; in vast numbers of men, whatever their conduct, the sense of a conflict between their higher and lower nature is the central fact of their lives—God is always at least a thought in their souls. But there is an immense army of men who, far from feeling the idea of God to be the most beautiful and lifting emotion of the human spirit, and far from feeling any sense of menace or anxiety in that idea, never give a thought to God.[1]

1. All our thinking should be done under the discipline of a great positive faith. God must be in all our thoughts. It is by our certainties that we shall be judged. Not by what we don't know and can't know, but what we can and must. It will not be our agnosticism that will be our salvation or necessarily our condemnation, but where we subsided into weak and futile negation when strong and strenuous affirmation became us. Let us insist upon that point, for it is of the very last importance in these days of ours. Men tell us, and with a good deal of truth, that the age of dogmatism is past. Nobody has a good word to say for the dogmatist to-day. He threw stones at everybody in the day of his power, and in the day of his disgrace everybody throws stones at him. It is recognized, with justice, that dogmatism led to the arrest of intellectual and religious progress, and to the manifestation of the spirit of persecution. But we have passed from the age of dogmatism to the age of compromise.

¶ I do not by any means always agree with the writings of John Henry Newman, but I have never forgotten a passage of his descriptive of the peril of the English Church—he was at the time a member of that Church—in which he said that her boasted spirit of compromise and comprehension led her constantly to seek to steer between the Scylla and Charybdis of Aye and No. She would not say

[1] Muriel E. George, *The Garden of Comfort*, 17.

[1] H. Begbie, *In the Hand of the Potter*, 65.

Aye, and she would not say No: but she sought a *via media:* she would affirm nothing and deny nothing lest she should by either procedure offend some. Newman insisted on the peril of this position, and I do not suppose that anyone would deny the fact of the peril. The power of modern science has been in its certitude; its voice has been heard with no uncertain sound. Personally, I would rather a Church lived upon one truth and emphasized that truth, and that one alone, playing upon a solitary string, a Church of one idea, narrow but positive, than that it should talk the nebulous, formless, chaotic nothingism from which you cannot possibly be sure whether it believes anything, still less what it is that it believes.[1]

2. God is in our thoughts as an energy of hope, as a power for purity, as a principle of freedom. The old idolatries, the ancient intimidating prejudices pass away before the authentic presence of God's spirit in the mind, in the soul. Let us remember this. Do not let us blind ourselves to the tremendous significance of it. You recall the cynicism of Renan, when he declared that the idea of God was a useful belief to be supported at all costs because of its restraining effect upon the lower orders. This is the sort of thing that has driven the thousands of France into revolt against faith. God is the universal Magistrate, with His code of penalties in this world and the next for those who do not obey the Church. A certain notorious Englishman is reported to have said that religion is very necessary in Africa for the sake of the blacks: it teaches them to know their place. Even here, in the homeland, there are men and women of rank who take very much this low view of religion. God is hardly more than an invention of the imagination, such as old-fashioned nurses were wont to use to frighten and awe unruly children. Their main estimate of the value of the idea of God in the thoughts of the common people is that it helps to keep them in the station of life in which it has pleased God to place them. They have not the faintest conception of the truth that, if God is more than an ecclesiastical formula, He is a living, sanctifying, inspiring Presence within the mind and soul. He lifts the aspirations, widens the outlook, dignifies the manhood, and inspires thoughts of freedom, progress, personal and national righteousness such as elevate and transfigure humanity. So far from the living God destroying and deadening moral ambition in the human mind, and crushing out resolves of hope and progress, the result is exactly the contrary. A thousand illustrations crowd to the mind, and leap to the lips of men and women who lived with low and sensual tastes and views until they were, as St. Paul would say, 'apprehended' by the living God, and they became henceforth redeemed, emancipated personalities, to count as strenuous, indomitable forces on the side of righteousness, freedom, peace, and truth. No, no; the truth of it is in the simple children's hymn—

> But I have felt Thee in my thoughts
> Fighting with sin for me.

¶ But if a man is not apprehended by the living God, what then? It has often been asked, Why does Dante place heretics in the Inferno, in close proximity to the discontented and the violent? We are so apt, says Bishop Boyd Carpenter, to think of heresy merely as an intellectual error—the holding of some opinion which is not orthodox—that we are conscious of a difficulty in finding a reason for the placing of heresy here. But, if I mistake not, heresy, according to Dante, is more closely allied with its ancient than its modern meaning. Bishop Jeremy Taylor, with his wonted affluence of speech, argued that heresy, rightly interpreted, was more closely allied with error of life than error in opinion. Thomas Aquinas lays stress, as Dr. Moore says, upon the notion of choice, or choosing what to believe, implied in the derivation of the word heresy (*Studies,* 2nd Ser., p. 177). Some commentators on Dante have argued that heresy here ought to be understood of one special form of error, viz., a materialistic belief which was practically a denial of God. There may be some justification for such a view, but it hardly covers the ground; it fails to supply the psy-

[1] C. Silvester Horne, *The Soul's Awakening,* 198.

chological harmony which is required if we are to relate the circle of the discontented with the circles that follow. But have we not the key in our hands? The spirit of wrathful discontent may well develop into violence, but it does not leap from discontent into murder without some intervening phase. This intervening phase is the spirit which begins to disregard Divine sanctions and safeguards in life. The thought of God is lost sight of; man will go his own way; from discontented anger he passes into a recklessness and wilfulness of mind. 'The ungodly,' said the Psalmist, 'is so proud that he careth not for God' (Ps. x. 4). To use the popular metaphor, such an one takes the bit in his teeth: 'Tush, there is no God in life, how should God perceive it? Is there knowledge in the Most High? Or, if there be, why should we consider it or anything but what we wish? If God does not give what we desire, let us act and do the best for ourselves.' The spirit of the materialist is in all this; but it must not be forgotten that the phase of mind is the important matter, not the particular form in which this phase may appear: it is the mental or moral attitude which is ready to fling off moral restraint, and instead of waiting upon God, to choose for itself. This may land a man in some doctrinal heresy, but it is wholly different from the moral state of the man who, in search for truth, will not make his judgment blind, and who reaches an opinion which does not square with orthodoxy. Intellectual difficulties are not sins. Mistaken and erroneous opinions are not sins. Heterodoxy is not heresy in the Dantesque or in the primitive sense. The heresy which Dante describes is the heresy of the soul which flings off moral considerations and claims the right of choosing and acting for self, regardless of the will and law of God. It is quite possible that heterodoxy may sometimes fall within this circle, but the essential feature of the circle does not deal with mental but with moral attitude, and, thus understood, it holds a fit and intelligible place in the poem.[1]

[1] W. B. Carpenter, *The Spiritual Message of Dante*, 85.

The Higher Judgments.

Ps. x. 5.—'Thy judgments are far above out of his sight.'

God's judgments are out of a man's sight. There are regions of which we have no cognizance, which do not enter into our thought or sympathy, but in which we are being judged every day. A man's life depends much upon his consciousness of the judgments passed upon him. If a man is satisfied with the lower judgments that relate to his earthly condition and appeal to his immediate prospects, he leaves untasted and untouched his right to the richer series of judgments far above him, which are condemning or approving all his life. This thought almost seems to open the universe before us, to let us see the clouds in the heavens filled with the long series of thrones, growing whiter and whiter until the great white throne stands above them all. On each one sits one of the judges, and at the summit of all is God Himself; and every action that we do, every thought and every life is ever passing up and being judged at each one of these separate judgment seats. And the richness and the sacredness and solemnity of a man's life depend on his consciousness of these judgments which are forever being passed upon him. And the condemnation of the wicked, according to the Psalmist, is that God's judgments are so far above out of sight, and the wicked is so busy groping in the dust of the prsent life, that he is unmoved, unsolemnized, unchanged, unaffected by all the great judgments which the higher powers of the universe are passing upon his life.

Think how many of us live in lower judgments. Think how we live before the judgment seat of pleasure, deciding whether the thing that we are going to do is to give us happiness or unhappiness for the moment. Think how we live before the judgment seat of profit, deciding whether the thing we are going to do shall make us richer or poorer. Think how we live before the judgment seat of reputation, doing or not doing things according as those who stand around us, with

no higher standards than our own, are going to approve or disapprove. And all the time tower before us these great judgment-seats of God, so far above us, out of our sight. Think what some of them are.

1. The *universe* is judging us all the time as to whether we shall find and occupy the place that has been appointed for us in the purposes of God. There is no more solemn thought for any man than that there is one place in the world which is meant for him, which he is capable of filling, and which nobody else can fill. And the universe is perpetually judging him by whether or not he is occupying that vacant place. It is approving or condemning him as he does or leaves undone the part set for him among all the millions of mankind.

Somewhere within the bounds of earth there lies
A work for me to do, for me alone;
None else can do it, it is meant for me
And I must find it out; but where to seek?

Soul, cast thyself in wondering love before
The Throne of Him Who gives this work to thee,
Ask Him to shew thee where it lies, and how
To do it; He waits for this, and then in love
He shews it thee,—it may be hard, a life of pain,
Or harder still, a life of joy, and it will need
Just all those gifts God has bestowed on thee
Yielded to Him that He may work in thee;
And thou shalt learn to serve, and not to shrink.
This life of service lived for Him alone,
Lived in His Presence, near Him, by His side
Doing His work, brings peace as its reward.
And afterwards, what then? it leads to God.[1]

2. There is the judgment that *absolute righteousness* is always passing upon us, that calm abstraction which we call the right, which makes itself known so really through all the operations of the world. Our lives come up before that righteousness sitting throned in its calmness, and are judged by it. It casts us aside for our perversity, or it takes us into its embrace and makes us stronger for what little righteous contribution we have made to the good activities of the world.

¶ Every human being has not only the idea of Right; but he himself is capable of Rectitude. We are made not only to admire the Right; for the same faculty, that discerns it as a Universal Law, proclaims it to be our own Supreme Law. Right is not revealed to us as the glory of unapproachable beings, whom we must reverence at a hopeless distance. It is made known to us with the consciousness, that rectitude is bound up with our own lives.[1]

3. Then there are all the *pure and noble men* who are for ever judging us—not malignantly condemning us, not feebly applauding us for little things, but deciding, as each of us comes into their presence, whether there is any use in us, whether there is anything that we can do to make things stronger in the interests of which they live.

4. Thus the universe and righteousness and the noblest men are sitting on the judgment-seats; and our thoughts and lives are for ever coming before them for judgment. And above them, whiter than them all, is *the great white throne.* There God Himself sits, knowing every action of our lives, judging whether we are capable of receiving Him—God with His inexpressible unutterable, unfathomable love, trying to put Himself into our lives, to make us rich with His richness, good with His goodness, and finding in our character every moment either acceptance or repulsion, either invitation or rejection of His love; God judging us with that importunate affection which beats at the door of our nature, with that affection which would fain make our lives filled with His life, with that affection that feels itself accepted or refused. And the judgment

[1] H. L. Hubbard, *Epiphanies*, 19.

[1] W. E. Channing.

of the soul lies in the refusal of the offer of God.

To casual seeing he was just the same
That he had always been; he dressed the same
And walked and talked as he had always done,
And when he laughed the old familiar chuckle
Came in just pat as it was used to do;
So that it was no wonder bland outsiders
Thought him the man that they had always known.
But though he made no sign and walked securely
The usual round of every-day affairs,
He was no more the man that he had been
Than I am Julius Cæsar. For when sounded
For his behoof that strange imperious call
Which, name it fate or duty, each man hears
Lifting above the noises of the world
Once with authentic summons in his soul,—
Because it spoke to him in too stern fashion
Bidding him go the difficult way of pain
And stress and starry loneliness that leads
To the fair summit of one austere glory,
He turned aside, and therewith pulled about him
His house of life forever. A difference slight
It might have seemed, and common; he but chose
One path instead of another, merely took
What seemed the way of facile treading; yet
By the fine irony of the unforeseen
The path he chose became for him indeed
The difficult way of pain and loneliness
That leads to God knows whither. So he passed
With his strict doom upon him down the days,
Dogged to the end by diligent regret.
And though he spoke no word and walked securely
The usual round of every-day affairs,
Within his eyes I caught the look of one
Who bears a secret trouble at his heart;
And now I never see him but I think
Of the heroic path he might have trod
And those dim peaks of his refusèd greatness.[1]

[1] J. Bunker, *Shining Fields and Dark Towers*, 107.

The Foundations.

Ps. xi. 3.—'For the foundations are destroyed: what hath the righteous wrought?' (RVm).

1. When the poet asked that question, so many centuries ago, he represented a feeling, and a time, which are reproduced with multiplied force to-day. He tells of danger everywhere, a throne shaken, a realm unsettled; strife, revolt, lawlessness, anarchy even, close at hand. Society rocks; and if the foundations be destroyed what can the righteous do? The answer is ever memorable. The later verses of the Psalm are a song of splendid reliance on God. Whatever may happen on earth, the Lord is in His Holy Temple: His Throne is in heaven: His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men: He will bring the right to victory, the wicked to defeat; for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness: the upright shall behold His face.

The foundations are being cast down. Certainly that saying is desperately and piercingly true of to-day. And it looks as if, with those old foundations, have gone those amenities of man and man, that golden rule of 'do to all men as you would they should do to you,' because of which, even in what we thought the worst times, men and women managed to live relying upon a certain chivalry from each other, on a touch of nature which, even in days of danger and despair, made the whole world kin. In spite of all that has been told us by eye-witnesses from our own land, we have hardly yet understood the meaning of the gigantic struggle that has devastated Russia and has spread far beyond the limits of that immense land.

At first we fancied that a great movement of emancipation had found birth amid the stress of revolution. Now we know that the devils of crime have broken loose—treachery, murder, greed, atheism, persecution, passion and savagery. It is not liberty that has come but anarchy. The foundations are utterly cast down. And all over Europe men dread that the same catastrophe is at the doors. Every-

where there are those who preach the gospel of destruction, the delusion that you can win welfare by robbery, happiness for men by plundering and killing other men, a reign of freedom by destroying law and uprooting religion.

2. The foundations are being cast down; and what hath the righteous done? That is the question which stares us in the face to-day. And the question must be asked of all respectable people, of us who live peaceably in our habitations, and worship our fathers' God. We are, in the phrase of the moment, up against Reality. What have religious people done? What will they do?

(1) First, we must look facts in the face, and not merely talk or write in the newspapers about them. Now the facts of history are quite firm. They say quite plainly the same things as the words of those who in all ages have won their inspiration from God. St. Paul, in the midst of troubles, when no one could have foreseen what the small despised Church of Christ should become, saw the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain, and even the Christians, the leaders of progress, fired with the spirit of God, groaning too. But he saw that they were expectant, knowing that the sufferings of that present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory that should be revealed to them, and should come in God's time upon the earth. The prophet Jeremiah, who was not afraid to prepare his people for disaster, spoke words which are as true as they are plain: 'Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited.' What a vivid comparison. A bright bloom for a few hours: but drought and dry and piercing winds shrivel it up. It is like the chaff which the wind scattereth upon the face of the earth: 'Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out his roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.'

(2) Nor does philosophy justify our fears. Philosophy tells us—and experience verifies the truth of it— that we have both to wait on, and to work with, God. As the Archbishop of Dublin put it in a striking paper at the Leicester Church Congress: 'God has limited Himself by the fact of creation, and especially by the creation of finite wills, and therefore these limitations are not to be regarded as derogating from His omnipotence. Practically it means that, things being as they are, we are in a world in which we have no right to appeal to the omnipotence of God as to a magical formula which should deliver us from the awful pains and struggles of life. God cannot deny Himself. He is working in us, and with us, to bring about the victory of the good, the supreme blessing, the Kingdom of God. God is not far away from us in some remote heaven, living in calm, unruffled peace, untroubled by our sorrows. He is with us in the struggle, sharing our pains, and helping us to endure them, and to overcome. God prizes the triumph of goodness so much that He is willing to make every sacrifice, no matter how great, in order to attain it. And He will attain it.'

(3) And the very fact of Christianity answers our fears. Some fancy that the War has shown us a failure of religion. It has not. It has shown us quite certainly that true Christianity, the full religion of Christ, and full Catholic faith, has not failed and never can fail. The shams which have masqueraded as Christianity have failed—a Church without creeds, a Christianity which is a life of selfishness, and arrogance, and aggression. These have failed, but not the religion of Jesus Christ. We know that in His will is our peace, and that our restless heart finds rest in Him. That is our enduring hope. And that hope, of which humanity has perhaps never been entirely destitute, grows through the ages—the hope of man in the Almightiness of God.

The Testing of the Bible.

Ps. xii. 6.—'The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, purified seven times.'

WHERE are the words of the Lord to be found? We turn at once to the Bible. Is there any process to which that Word has been subjected? There is; and it is of the nature of testing or trying. What is the result, after all the testing and trying? It is that 'the words of the Lord are pure words' manifestly tried, 'seven times purified.'

1. First, the Word has been tried by the prolonged and severe conflict it has had with the evil existing in the world. It is truth in opposition to all error; holiness as opposed to all sin; love as opposed to all malignity. If the Word is of God it will occupy His place. So it does. It is bitter against nothing but evil, enamoured of nothing but good. If it is of Him it will do His work. So it has. Everywhere, always, among friends and foes, through evil report and through good report, it has been, and still remains, the one spirit-word speaking in the understanding and the conscience, the one mighty word, convincing and subduing, the one representative word of the great and ever-blessed God, steadfast, inflexible, uncorrupted, incorruptible, a fixed resolve, a consecrated antagonism to all that God hates and all that God seeks to destroy. And that long-continued antagonism has tried it so far as, in that respect, it could possibly be tried.

2. In the second place, it has been tried by all the contradictions of unbelief, and these are numberless. As it was with the Divine Master, so it has been with the Divine Word. Both have received the same treatment. Concerning Christ the record is that He 'endured the contradictions of sinners against himself.' Just so has it been with the Word of God. Notwithstanding, there it is, not only unmoved, but immovable. They have heated the furnace to the intensest heat and cast it in, and the result has been that it has lost nothing but the tinsel with which man's folly had bedizened it, or the bonds wherewith man's authority sought to bind it. Thus it is that to-day we bear testimony triumphant through these ages of conflict and contradictions that 'the words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.'

3. In the third place, it has been tried by the false friends of religion. We complain of the bitter temper and the unfair dealings of unbelief. Naturally. But it may be accounted for, if it cannot be excused. There are others towards whom we should turn the tide of our indignation and complaint, and for this purpose we must go to those who profess to be, but who are not, friends of the gospel. In the first centuries, when Christianity had proved itself to be a great moral power, some worldly men who had come to the front in its leadership determined to make it a political engine. They wore the garb of Christianity, they learned to pronounce its shibboleth, they claimed to speak in its name, to embody its temper, and to wield its power. They came to the front, took the highest place, surrounded themselves with all that society could supply them of pomp and ceremony and power. They professed to represent the Word of God, to be its depositaries, its authorized expositors, those, and those only, who had the full knowledge of it, or the power or authority to tell the world what it really meant. But they kept it practically in the background, and overloaded it with dogmas and ceremonies alien to the spirit of the Word: the only manifestly certain result being to keep the people in a state of ignorance and dependence. Yet all that was done in the name of the Bible, and these representative men said, 'That is the Word of God, what God has appointed, what God sanctions.' Notwithstanding all, here it is—more loved, better understood, more widely diffused, and in the name of the Lord and for His glory, more entirely exalted than ever. 'As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.'

4. In the fourth place it has been proved by the personal experience of both saints and sinners. If the question now considered were merely a theory to be disputed we should have no practical test by which either to establish or to confute it; but it is a matter altogether for practice and for experience. The world brings every statement to this ultimate test; therefore every man and woman and child able to understand its meaning may here find something to confute if the experience does correspond. Many men have thus received it. It has pervaded and penetrated and filled their whole being; it has been the foundation of their strongest convictions; it has been the fire of their warmest passions; it has been the law that has bound their conscience; it has been that which has helped them in every duty and in every difficulty. For it comes to us as a word that may be tried; it offers a sure and happy guidance; it promises restraint from evil; it promises aid and promptings in the pursuit of good; it assures us of new strength in the discharge of duty, of strong consolation in the hour of trial, a calm peace amidst the tumult of the world, and holy victory in the hour of death.

¶ We hear to-day of Christianity being 'at the cross-roads.' The New Testament is being torn in pieces at the hands of a remorseless criticism. The four Gospels are under the microscope. Upon every sentence, every word, is being brought to bear the fiercest light that ever played on human handiwork. In this light we are asked to consider, not only the limitations of the Gospel writers, but the limitations of Him whose words and deeds they record. Taken by itself, it is a disturbing study.

But is that all we really have? The heart knows better. Jesus, whatever the critics make of Him, remains for ever the Creator of the Christian consciousness. He remains the Creator of the soul of to-day. From the Cross, however interpreted, has streamed out a force of love, of spiritual power, which has been the life of the later world. No criticism can ever touch the inner experiences of Paul, of Peter, of Augustine, of Bernard, of Wesley, of Livingstone; of the myriad unknown ones who in all the ages have by faith overcome the world, have tasted the rapture of the spiritual life. With Jesus came a creation of inner values which no destructive dynamite can blow away. Love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, faith—here is an aliment on which souls have thriven as never before. Here are riches lodged in the world's heart, safe from assault, where no moth or rust can corrupt, where no thieves can break through and steal.[1]

Moral Death.

Ps. xiii. 3.—'Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.'

With little or no straining these words may be turned into a prayer against the peril of moral and spiritual death. Under the emblem of death pious souls in all ages have been wont to depict a torpor, coldness and inactivity of the moral and spiritual faculties.

1. Take first, *moral death.*

(1) Are we sufficiently aware that the main point in bringing up children is to give them moral life, to foster and cherish the germ of true virtue which they have by nature, so that at maturity conscience may be in them a living power? Is it remembered as it should be that the mere machinery of discipline, however needful and indispensable, does not by itself conduce to moral life? You must have rules for behaviour. But if this enforcement of rule covers the whole ground of your moral discipline you have done nothing to foster the germ of true virtue in the heart of your child. He will grow up (so far as you are concerned) destitute of real moral life. It is easy to see why. You have been dealing only with externals. You have left his character untouched. You have not been leading him to rule himself, you have not provided for the day that is coming in which he will pass entirely out of reach of your rules and will regard himself as his own master—which,

[1] J. B. Brierley.

being interpreted in the language of mournful fact, often means, 'his own slave.' If you wish to see your child grow up to live, not merely conform to, a moral life you must do more than give rules for his conduct, and enforce or encourage obedience. You must teach him likewise to hate evil and to love good. You must supply higher and better motives for right conduct than those of personal comfort and personal pain. You must teach him that good behaviour by itself is of little advantage to him unless he wishes to be good and is good by choice. Now, for deliverance from moral death in the young man or woman—mainly due to moral death in parents and teachers—there is but one remedy, the lightening of the eyes, the lightening of the soul. That reveals the truth about moral life and shows up the inherent vileness of sin and the nobility rather than the utility of all virtue. Who of us, thinking solemnly of our children, will not pray with the Psalmist, 'Lighten thou mine eyes, that I sleep not in death'?

¶ Those days of childhood, which he recalled so exactly and in which he lived much to the end, were days in which he was, as he himself says, 'eminently religious.' Out of the many incidents for which we are indebted to Mr. Graham Balfour one only shall be quoted, but it is typical of many more. It is a saying recorded by his mother in the fourth year of his age: 'Lou said, "You can never be good unless you pray." When asked how he knew, he said with great emphasis, "Because I've tried it."' Of course it would be absurd to cite any such incident as evidence for a man's religion, but at least it shows us what was the first atmosphere and climate of his life. No one can tell how much it had to do with the faith and character of later years.

Every child is more or less devout in early childhood. It needs but a touch to awaken the response to God whose heaven lies about us all in our infancy. It would seem that Stevenson's childhood was more than usually religious, and those who appreciate religion must feel that this circumstance sets a special value on his power of recollecting his childhood and continuing to be a child. To revert to such a childhood is to be led constantly in among religious thoughts and ideals. They were to a great extent the thoughts and ideals of his nurse, Alison Cunningham, a Christian believer of the older Scottish school. Yet they were his own also, and long after he had passed out of the influence of her creed he retained much that he had learned from her. The vivid memory of one's former simplicity of faith is to all true men an irresistible appeal for reverence. In the words of Rossetti:

> though I loved not holy things,
> To hear them mocked brought pain:
> They were my childhood.[1]

(2) Another form of moral death may be found in those of maturer years whose whole morality consists in simple imitation of others, in ruling life by the ordinary customs and opinions of their own little circle. Thousands of quiet, respectable people are destitute of moral life; they exist, they enjoy, they toil, they maintain themselves and their families decently, they commit no crime, they are addicted to no vice, but nevertheless they are in a state of moral death. The essential conditions of moral life are absent. Unless a man is as wide-awake and as busy over the culture of his hidden character, as busy over the thoughts, purposes and motives of his heart as he is over his worldly interests, he is to that extent sleeping the sleep of moral death.

> O dullard souls! by sense and circumstance
> Enclosed, unstirred by generous discontent
> To burst the bonds that hold ye prisonpent—
> The caitiff creatures of ignoble chance!
> For you the heavens are but a blind expanse;
> In vain achieved stone grows eloquent,
> Or sobbing organ labours, heavenward spent,
> Or Poet seeks God's spirit in the Man's!

[1] J. Kelman, *The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 61.

O as some trembling vestal acolyte
Might nurse the flickering flame that may not die,
Or beacon-watcher rouse on some lone height
The red heart 'mid the ashes fearfully,
Cherish, ere yet it falter into night,
The fitful spark of immortality.[1]

(3) Closely akin to this is another form of moral death, into which some sink who once knew the nobility and the blessedness of moral life. They began their worldly career not merely innocent, but longing and striving to be good. But through adverse circumstances, through the pressure of the struggle for existence, they have been led to follow the evil example of the multitude, to copy their small dishonesties and their petty deceits. They have ceased to have scruples in doing things and in conniving at things which in their early days they shrank from as wicked. In doing much that is really wrong but is not looked upon as wrong by their companions and friends, in excesses of various kinds, they gradually become morally weaker from day to day, and at last the sleep of death comes over their hearts and consciences, and moral activity or heroic virtue is for them no longer possible.

¶ Moral confusion does not at first spring from a deliberate choice of evil. Few men enter with design on a course of life which must issue in moral disaster, but many attempt a compromise between the best they know and something lower. We easily deceive ourselves by imagining that somehow we may secure exceptional privileges in the moral sphere. We plead our good intentions, or urge that the good we desire to secure is so advantageous that we may for a time disregard the law to which we intend to offer a complete obedience when once we have secured our purpose. But it is always bad business to make a bargain with the Devil. He is reluctant to lose his servants, and we cannot compromise in morality without ourselves becoming morally debased.[2]

[1] Edmund Garrett.
[2] *The Spirit of Man*, Selected Essays from *The Times*, ii. 89.

2. Take next *spiritual death*. If moral death is widespread even among respectable citizens, spiritual death is equally prevalent among professedly religious people. And this is due to ignorance rather than baseness, to a darkness which only the light of God can dispel. Spiritual death may be brought on by these means among others: by falseness in the creed detected but not rejected, by superstition, by an unfounded dread of God, by undue regard for the mere externals of religious observances, by ignorance of what is really essential to true religion. These may be called the intellectual agents of spiritual disease and death. But there are other agents, which are practical; such as being so engrossed in earthly pursuits and ambitions as to forget God altogether; giving up regular habits of prayer and communion with God; seeking too eagerly the pleasures and indulgences of the flesh; and grieving over and resenting the troubles and ills of our life, till we become alienated from Him who is our Creator and Lord, and by whose will all things are. We may suffer spiritual death not only by forsaking what are called religious exercises, but also by placing ourselves in those conditions most unfavourable to the health and life of the soul, or by cultivating a spirit of exaggerated pride and self-confidence, which tempts us to look more and more on ourselves as all-sufficient and upon the living God as a superfluity. If your soul can live; it can also die—in this world at least—whatever be the Almighty Power by which it can be renewed in a world to come. 'O Lord, lighten thou mine eyes, that I sleep not in death.'

Consider and hear lest mine enemy triumph,
Yes, lighten mine eyes that I sleep not in death;
That spiritual darkness, that slothfulness dreaded.
The devil's temptation—his mean shibboleth.
Lord, I would cling to Thee—
Fain would I bring to Thee
Praise with each breath.[1]

[1] M. Hitchin-Kemp, *The Ideal of Sympathy*, iii.

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